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SEGA SPORTS

NBA 2K1

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Time to reach out and posterize someone. Our new online gameplay lets you and up to three of your boys use one console to take on wannabes nationwide — from gloating Laker groupies in L.A. to nostalgic Knicks-worshippers in Queens. There's e-mail so you can, uh, "chat." Plus franchise mode, swat blocks, and ill crossovers and spin moves. All with graphics tighter than a point guard's shorts circa 1974. Now we'll see who's got internet game.

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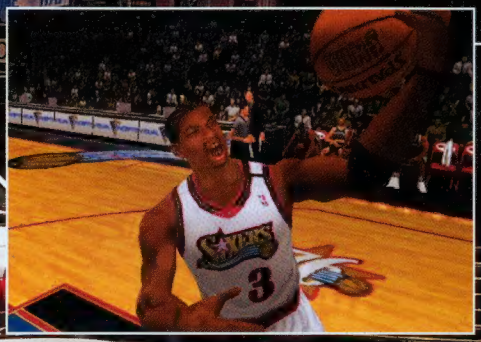

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VOL. 3, NUMBER 5 • ISSUE #30 www.gamersrepublic.com

gamers' Republic MANIFESTO

So last month I raged on about how angry I was about the Democrats. Since, I've witnessed the Senate hearings on violence in the media, where Joe Lieberman stated that he and Al are not out to censor, but to go after the marketing of violent media towards kids. Truth or tale? Industry execs and readers alike have and continue to express concern. Weird how Cannon Spike got delayed, don't ya think? I also watched Al field questions on MTV's well-staged forum, Rock the Vote, where I must admit, he did very well. He's a smart man and will probably make a good president, barring someone aims a nuke at us. Why do I say *will* make? Well, because I've also witnessed G.W. Bush's actions of late and now all I wanna know is how the heck this guy got anywhere near the White House? Sure, Letterman, O'Brien, and Leno would get four years of new material, but this guy should be working at, like, a shoe store.

That said, on with the business at hand, that being the limited number of PS2s available at launch, and everyone and his hamster signing up to develop for Xbox. Can you say port mania? If the Xbox lineup consists of 90 percent PS2 ports, why will anyone buy one? Whatever happened to exclusive original content? Regarding the PS2 shortage, I think it may work itself out. Some games are going to be late, too, which may cause some to hesitate as many supposed launch titles are already seeping into November and early December. A good percentage of pre-books never show anyway, and the big, bright-light low-prices chains like WalMart and Target will have unspoken-for units on day one. You may have to wear combat gear, but if you want a PS2 bad enough, chances are, you'll find one. Crazy gamers always do. You know Sega popped a cork with that announcement, though. They're Internet-ready (and savvy) and have an almost too-good-to-be-true lineup headed up by NFL2K1, Skies of Arcadia, Grandia II, Shenmue and Jet Grind, not to mention a 50 percent lower price tag. But hey, Nintendo may just rain on everyone's parade: Majora's Mask, Banjo-Tooie, Conker, and Dinosaur Planet are all mini-events. It all comes down to the games in the end. Always has.

november 2000

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• # of deja vu meetings attended by Dave and Brady: 10+

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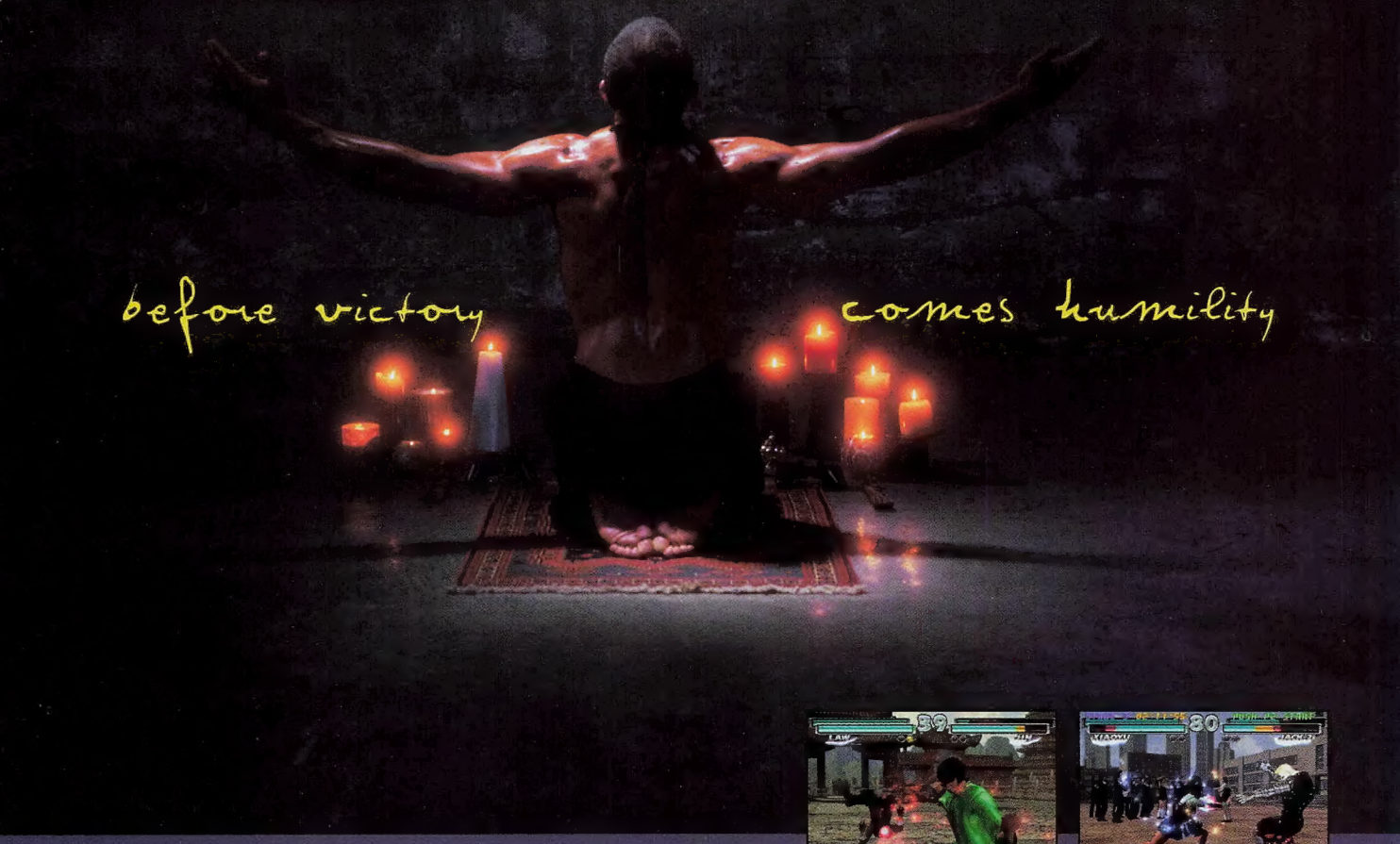

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GR VOL. 3 ISSUE # 6

TRANSCONTINENTAL GAMING GUIDE
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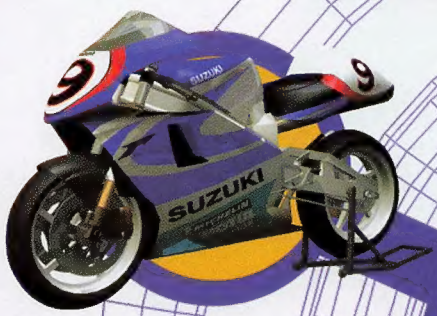
PHANTASY STAR .24

It's the RPG that Sega fans have been screaming for since the demise of the Genesis. Now, finally, Phantasy Star returns—but this is no mere sequel. PSO will attempt to break new ground as the first cooperative RPG with play on- and offline, or a combination of both. The old Sega is back and innovation is at hand.



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AUTUMN 2000 TOKYO GAME SHOW .30

Sega and Square were missed at the Autumn Tokyo Game Show, but playing an advanced build of the incredible Gran Turismo 3 nearly made up for it. And Konami's Z.O.E., making its playable debut, surpassed all expectations. Check out the full report starting on page 30.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA .80

On October 26, the PlayStation 2 launches. On the same day comes The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask. Don't you dare walk out of the store without this Nintendo gem. Once again, Nintendo captures magic in the world of Link, unleashing it for you to escape in. Forget for a while about all that fancy technology and witness artistry transcend the N64 hardware.

MONTHLY GAMING NEWS

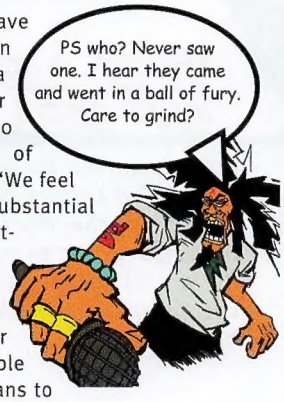
FRONTLINES

MICROSOFT GETS SOME GAMES TO PUT IN ITS BOX

With PS2 almost here and Nintendo recently giving the lowdown on Gamecube, Microsoft was abuzz with activity in September as the house that Bill Gates built made big announcements regarding Xbox—and the console is really looking like it could become a contender. Metal Gear Solid X, Silent Hill X, Jurassic Park X and Crash Bandicoot X were all announced from Konami, doubtlessly sending worries through Sony executives planetwide. Other franchises shown included Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, Unreal Tournament, Star Trek, Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee, Ultimate Fighting Championship, NASCAR, NFL Blitz, and Ready 2 Rumble. J. Allard, general manager of Xbox, stated that over 1,000 development kits have been sent out (Konami has 100 dev kits by itself) and over 100 games are currently in development. A grand total of 156 third-party developers were announced, including most of the industry's heavy hitters such as Capcom, Namco, Tecmo, Activision, Eidos, Ubi Soft, THQ, Rockstar, id Software, Crystal Dynamics, Gathering of Developers, Neversoft, Atlus, Crave, Hudson Soft, Jaleco, Fox Interactive, and Midway (see the complete list at gamersrepublic.com). Notable by their absence were Electronic Arts and Squaresoft, but given their PC ties, it's probably only a matter of time. Microsoft also revealed their console's official name (Xbox, of course) and its new, stylish logo.

MY PREBOOK GOT TOOK!

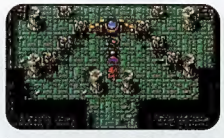
Putting a damper on what could have been the most spectacular launch in gaming history, Sony announced in a teleconference held late September that it will only be shipping 500,000 PS2s to stores nationwide instead of the 1 million previously announced. "We feel that 500,000 units is still a pretty substantial offering to consumers," said Jack Tretton, SCEA's VP of sales. Retailers such as Electronics Boutique have been informing customers that unless they have fully prepaid for their system, then they won't be able to get one on the first day. Sony plans to make an additional 100,000 systems available every week following launch, for a total of 1.3 million systems out by Christmas and 3 million by March 31. SCEA president Kaz Hirai blames the cutback on wanting to "supply the market with a continuous flow of product" as well as a "component supply shortage" for the system. Industry analysts, however, have speculated that Sony may be constricting the supply to drive up demand, much like Nintendo was accused of doing in the '80s. At any rate, if you aren't able to get a PS2, there's always that newly discounted Dreamcast with Jet Grind Radio or Zelda: Majora's Mask for N64 that will be available the same day.



CORRECTIONS

Even GR makes mistakes...occasionally. First off, in our last issue we mistakenly noted there were 26 initially playable characters in Capcom vs. SNK when there are, in fact, 28. Second, a few game scores mysteriously wound up incorrect. While it's a very good game, Street Fighter EX 3 should have received a B instead of an A-, and Gungriffon Blaze is actually a B+. Finally, we apologize for the cut-off on the SSX Snowboarding review. Just know it's the best snowboarding game ever made and one of the top PS2 launch titles.

IN OTHER NEWS...



THE CLASSIC RPG REBORN ON WONDERSWAN!

•Bandai's WonderSwan Color will hit Japan later this year along with a beautifully enhanced port of Final Fantasy 1; enhanced versions of FF2 and FF3 will follow...

•Bandicoots on the move! Konami and Universal will be bringing Crash Bandicoot, Jurassic Park III and The Thing to multiple consoles next year including PS2, Xbox and GB Advance. Now Sony has no mascot...

•Hot franchises heading to PS2 from Activision include Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, Spider-Man and two X-Men games: one adventure and one fighting...

•Capcom will be bringing the Rival Schools tag-team sequel Project Justice to Dreamcast this fall, while Cannon Spike has been delayed into 2001...

•Tommy Tallarico teamed up with the Hungarian National Symphony Orchestra to create music for the upcoming Evil Dead game...

•Working Designs had Treasure retool the U.S. version of Silpheed: The Lost Planet for PS2 to remove any hint of slowdown. Hopefully it will still make launch, but if not, expect it a few weeks after...

•BAM Entertainment will be publishing several licensed games for Game Boy Color utilizing classic Taito game engines: Dexter's Lab (Elevator Action), Yogi Bear Great Balloon Blast (Pop-n-pop) and Sgt. Rock On The Frontline (Frontline). They also have three Powerpuff Girls games on the way...

SILPHEED

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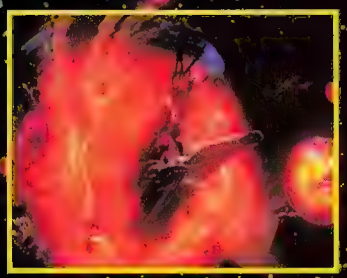
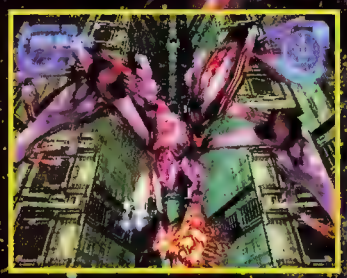

PlayStation 2

Animated Violence
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NINTENDO'S KEN LOBB ON GBA AND ALL THINGS CUBED

By Michael Puccini

Ken Lobb is Nintendo of America's executive producer, product acquisition and development. A former game producer at Namco, Ken's now responsible for Nintendo's exclusive Treehouse gang and the direct liaison with Rare (he's also who the Klobb weapon in GoldenEye was named after).

Gamers' Republic: For the hardcore gamers willing to pay the extra couple dollars a month in batteries, why hasn't Nintendo ever released a backlit version of Game Boy/GBC or plan to release a line of backlit units for GB Advance?
Ken Lobb: First of all, it would be more than just a couple dollars a month. What most people don't realize is that backlights suck the batteries big time. The other issue is that you really need a different type of LCD screen for a backlight. It's a different technology. The thin film that's being used on the GB Advance, it's the same as the GBC screen only it's a little thinner, and the reason it works so well, is because there's a reflector behind it. Those backlights would affect the reflector and it wouldn't work quite so well. And the goal of the GB Advance was: it's got to be super small, it's got to have a battery life longer than the GBC, and it should be lighter than the GBC. I also think that, if you look at systems that were backlit - and you know what they are, I'm a big handheld fan too, I've got them all - you can't play them in the light. Try and play the PC Engine Express—which was a brilliant handheld when it came out—try and play it on the beach. Good luck. You'd have to climb under seven towels. With the GB Advance and the GBC, the brighter the room the better it looks. And when you get it in the sun, that's when it looks the best.

"Watch This, I'll pull the ultimate puzzle-game combo and send this rookie back to mamma."

GR: Let's talk about Gamecube. What can you tell me about...
KL: Not much, but go ahead and ask.

GR: Well, it's something about ArtX and the Gamecube graphics chip. How did you like working with them, how was it that you chose them and what did they bring to the table that made you say, "We need to go with that technology"?
KL: I could probably answer that on the surface. The core of ArtX is the people who designed the graphics chip for the N64. So it wasn't so much them finding us or us finding them, these were our friends and we got along with them very well on the N64. And we also felt that they understood...y'know, Mr. Takeda's vision for Gamecube is very different from the N64. The vision for the N64 was to make a game console that is extremely powerful and at that time what that ended up meaning was extremely complicated. When he decided to design the Gamecube, the goal was, okay, we have the technology to make a super powerful machine, now we have to make it so that you can make really good games in a shorter amount of time. It was taking too long to make games on the N64. We had to make Gamecube not just easy but super easy. By using the original design team, or at least the core of them, they were able to resolve that issue. It's like Mr. Miyamoto said at Space World, he spent too much time worrying about optimization to get the N64 to do what he wanted it to do. And from what we've been hearing from other people with other hardware, these issues are huge right now and we want to remove that from the Gamecube. The objective of a game developer should be make the best games, not how do I get lights to work or how do I get collision to be better or how do I get as many polys as this other developer is doing.

GR: So what you're saying is that Gamecube will be developer-friendly right out of the box?
KL: Super, super easy to program. You're not going to need six high-level programmers just to get the thing to do just one-twentieth of what the specs says it will do.

GR: With the introduction of a DVD-based, low-priced, powerful supercomputer, do you see companies like Square and Enix and all the RPG companies coming back into the Nintendo fold?
KL: Well, that's always the hope. Obviously, format was the reason for some companies to stay away from the N64. But the ease of development was also a big issue. It's like when a team does a first game and they're like, "Well, that was hard and it's going to be harder to make this machine do more, to do what I want it to be able to do." They become reluctant.

GR: What impressions did you take away from Space World and then the ECTS?
KL: I was very, very happy. Going into the Space World show, I knew that people were going to be excited and I was going in expecting to be blown away and I was more than blown away.

GR: So even you were surprised with the stuff that you saw?
KL: Yeah, I hadn't seen what Mr. Miyamoto was working on. It was like, "Oh yeah!" Both Luigi and Zelda were just...stellar. Better than what I could have hoped for. Better than I've seen on anything.

GR: We think Retro Studios is developing the Metroid game and...
KL: Man, it sure is cloudy outside [laughs].
Tom Harlin (Nintendo P.R.): We haven't made any announcements on any of the launch titles, so until we do, we can't touch that one.

GR: Let's talk about Dreamcast. What are your thoughts on Sega's system?
KL: I think that there are problems with the Dreamcast. It's dramatically underpowered compared to real next-generation consoles. And someone had a quote a few years ago that I think is coming true, which is, "The Dreamcast really isn't the first next-generation machine, it's the last of the last-generation machines." It's really not that much more powerful than an N64. If you look at their games, what you really have are N64 poly counts in high-res at 60 fps with better textures. Y'know...you don't have 10-million-poly games, you have one-and-a-half-million-poly games. As far as their game quality, I think Dreamcast has some excellent games,

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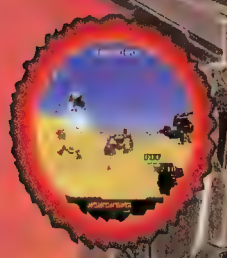

"*Easily* one of the best PS2 launch titles."
– Gamers' Republic

PlayStation 2

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence
Mild Language

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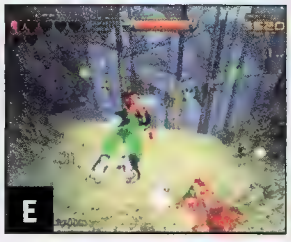
JAMMASHOWIN'

Just prior to this year's Autumn Tokyo Game Show, we attended the JAMMA show, a showcase for the latest in amusement machines, held at the epic-looking Tokyo Big Sight. Basically an arcade show, this year's JAMMA was dominated by Sega, which was some consolation for their absence at the TGS.

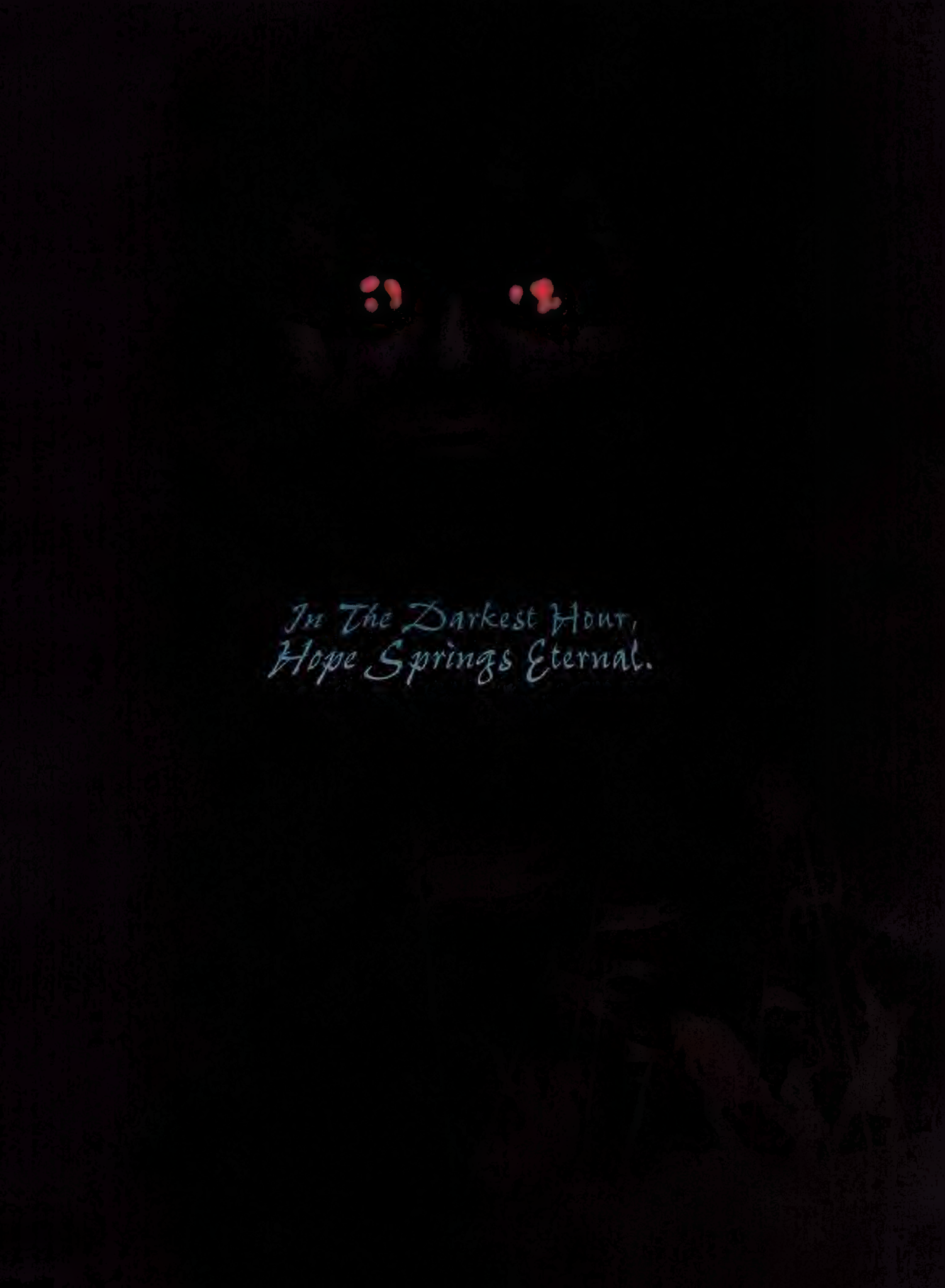


At the front of Sega's charge was the awesome Planet Harriers (D-F). In this fully polygonal sequel of sorts to Space Harrier, Sega's finely honed action sensibilities were on full display, as the addictive, Panzer-style lock-on system made for an incredibly fun and intense shooter experience. Through linked cabinets, players could cooperate with one another.

Sega also showed off their latest music offerings, including Samba de Amigo 2000, which featured new songs and new maraca movements, and Shakatto de Tambourine, a Samba-like game featuring, yes, a Tambourine. Like Samba, it was loads of fun, though there has been no word yet on a DC version with Tambourine peripheral. Also at the Sega booth was Confidential Mission, a new Virtua Cop-style shooter, Sega Strike Fighter, a three-screen F/A 18 flight simulator, and NASCAR Arcade. Finally, Sega demoed their new Naomi 2 hardware with a great technology showcase showing hundreds of fighting characters in a huge arena with full lighting effects.

Namco had a few interesting offerings, including Ridge Racer V Arcade (A,B), which looked to us almost identical to the PS2 version, and Ninja Assassins (C), a new light gun game. Namco also had their music entry in the form of a Beatmania style game using traditional Japanese Taiko drums.

Capcom stunned us with Giga Wing 2, an incredible-looking sequel to their overhead shooter Giga Wing. With its dynamic, polygonal backgrounds and insane shot reflection system, GW2 was easily the most impressive overhead arcade shooter we've seen in years. This game and a new Rival Schools sequel were the stars of the Capcom booth.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but they have no triple-A games. They have a lot of A games but they're not really driving their sales.

GR: How's everything going with Rare?
KL: Very well. Banjo-Tooie's basically done. A gorgeous game. I think that Rare...one of their advantages is that they realized what the N64 was early on, and they spent a whole lot of time figuring it out from an engineering standpoint and when you see Banjo-Tooie, Conker...these games are doing things that I think a lot of people didn't expect from the N64. We don't just have real-time lighting, we have shadows wrapping up the walls, we have way more textures than what anyone thought was possible—they've still got a slight low-res look, but they're crisp, they're not blurry. And then you get these big scenes where they've done a lot more than you'd expect to see in a scene on an N64 game and the frame-rate is fine. From an outside standpoint, Rare's always been able to put resources into the games to make them very deep and very big. Banjo-Tooie is huge, probably five times the geometry of Banjo-Kazooie. Not five times the play time, because Banjo-Kazooie had a lot of re-traversal, and in Banjo-Tooie, they've spent a lot more time spreading out the levels.

GR: With seeing Metroid in the Gamecube debut video, it got us thinking about other Nintendo classics, like for instance Kid Icarus. Does Nintendo ever want to put out another Kid Icarus?
KL: Mr. Miyamoto joked about that at E3. Metroid is a big game of our past. It wasn't one of our best sellers, but it was obviously big. Kid Icarus was a very minor-selling 8-bit game and a minor-selling Game Boy game. So although there might be some chance of a Kid Icarus game, I think that Mr. Miyamoto's eyes are now onto something new and to make some new franchises and new play control styles.

GR: How do you personally like the design of the Gamecube?
KL: I think it's awesome. I'll be honest and say that I thought the best-designed system, in a lot of ways, up to now, was the NEC PC Engine. It was awesome! It was this little, tiny, cool platform. It was a box and it was small and it fit wherever I wanted to put it. That's what the Gamecube is.

GR: What about the controller design?
KL: Awesome. It's the best controller ever designed. I'll just say that when you put that thing in your hand you'll go, "Yeah! Perfect." It weighs right. It's balanced right. It feels perfect.

GR: Let's talk about the PS2. Wha your thoughts on that system?
KL: I don't know...I have a lot of feelings about the PS2. Primarily, I think that regardless of what software they have, if you don't have hardware at launch then people are mad. That would be my primary feeling at the moment. It's like, if I really wanted to buy this and I haven't gone and put money on it, I'm kind of in a jam until like February. As far as software's concerned, I'm a huge gamer, you and I've talked about games for years, and what am I playing right now, that's my current favorite game, Dave Mirra BMX [pointing to screen shot on GR October issue]. Phenomenal game. Just absolutely brilliant. I'm playing this a lot too, Capcom vs. SNK [pointing to another cover screen]. Really great. Haven't played Orphen. I haven't seen much on it and I'm looking forward to it. I came out of ECTS thinking, PlayStation 2...yeah, they've got some good games for it, but it's like the Dreamcast all over again: there's some good games, but where are the great games?

(Next month, we sit down with Nintendo's Perrin Kaplan, vice-president, corporate communications.)

MAMA MIA! GR ITALIA STORMS THE ECTS

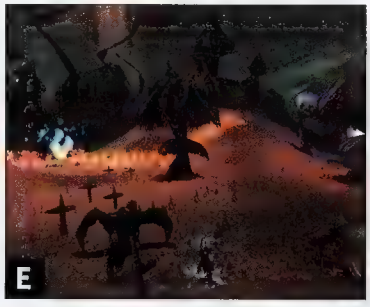
As some of you more multiculturally inclined readers may know, the English version of Gamers' Republic you now hold in your hands isn't the only edition that's published each month. Gamers' Republic also has an Italian edition (called *Game Republic*), and month after month our Italian staff works to deliver the best game and anime coverage in all of Europe (plus they get their own hentai section!).

For Europe's biggest gaming show, the ECTS, we had our Italian team invade London from Sept. 3-5 to check out the latest and greatest games from across the pond and deliver the info here to us.

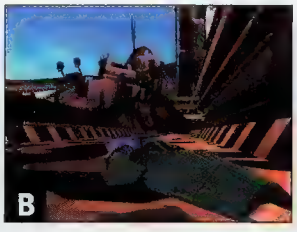
Seeing as how Sega bowed out of this year's ECTS, and Nintendo didn't have anything we hadn't seen before, Sony's PlayStation 2 was clearly the dominant system at the show. Konami revealed two minutes of new footage of Metal Gear Solid 2 (A), featuring Solid Snake jumping off a bridge and infiltrating the boat seen in the previous trailer, then engaging in a firefight where individual magazines are knocked from racks and torn to tatters as the bullets fly.

Outside Metal Gear, the most notable PS2 games all involved driving in one way or another. Sony Europe had new pics of Wipeout Fusion (B) and the first footage of The Getaway (C); SCI had The Italian Job (sort of like Driver) and Mille Milgia, a racer featuring classic automobiles; Ubi Soft's F1 Racing Challenge and Virgin's cartoony Stunt GP looked excellent also. For PS, interesting titles included Sony's military adventure C12 (D), the kid's musical game Jungle Book Groove Party, and This Is Football 2 (soccer).

Though it's a PC game, no report on ECTS would be complete without a mention of Shiny's Sacrifice (E), the most amazing real-time strategy game ever created, which was voted best PC game of the show. Even though ECTS clearly didn't have as many surprises as E3 or TGS, the latest out of Europe certainly whet our appetites for what's to come.


E

A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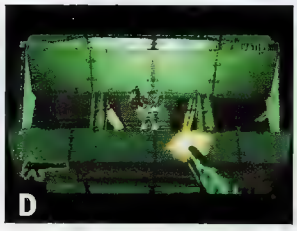
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MONTHLY CHARTS PROVIDED BY NPD DATA TRACKING SERVICES

top ten selling playstation titles

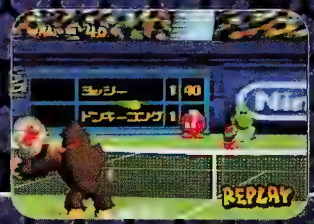
*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 10-16, 2000

1. MADDEN NFL 2001	EA	6. CHRONO CROSS	SQUARE/EA
2. PARASITE EVE 2	SQUARE/EA	7. GRAN TURISMO 2	SONY
3. DAVE MIRRA FS BMX	ACCLAIM	8. NFL GAMEDAY 2001	SONY
4. SPIDER-MAN	ACTIVISION	9. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION
5. RE: SURVIVOR	CAPCOM	10. DRIVER	GT INTERACTIVE

top ten selling nintendo64 titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 10-16, 2000

1. MARIO TENNIS	NINTENDO	6. KIRBY 64	NINTENDO
2. SW EPISODE 1: RACER	LUCAS ARTS	7. POKÉMON STADIUM	NINTENDO
3. MADDEN NFL 2001	EA	8. MARIO PARTY 2	NINTENDO
4. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION	9. NAMCO MUSEUM 64	NAMCO
5. PERFECT DARK	NINTENDO	10. MARIO KART 64	NINTENDO



top ten selling dreamcast titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 10-16, 2000

1. NFL 2K1	SEGA	6. SONIC ADVENTURE	SEGA
2. U.F.C.	CRAVE	7. SEAMAN	SEGA
3. SEGA GT	SEGA	8. WWF ROYAL RUMBLE	THQ
4. VIRTUA TENNIS	SEGA	9. NFL BLITZ 2001	MIDWAY
5. POWER STONE 2	CAPCOM	10. RUSH 2049	MIDWAY

top ten selling gameboy color titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 10-16, 2000

1. POKÉMON YELLOW	NINTENDO	6. POKÉMON PINBALL	NINTENDO
2. POKÉMON BLUE	NINTENDO	7. WARIO LAND 3	NINTENDO
3. POKÉMON RED	NINTENDO	8. SPIDER-MAN	ACTIVISION
4. POKÉMON TRADING CG	NINTENDO	9. PERFECT DARK	NINTENDO
5. SUPER MARIO DLX.	NINTENDO	10. T.HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION

top ten selling overall console titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 10-16, 2000

1. NFL2K1-DC	SEGA	6. DAVE MIRRA BMX-PS	ACCLAIM
2. MADDEN NFL 2001-PS	EA	7. SPIDER-MAN-PS	ACTIVISION
3. PARASITE EVE 2-PS	SQUARE/EA	8. RE: SURVIVOR-PS	CAPCOM
4. MARIO TENNIS-N64	NINTENDO	9. MADDEN NFL 2001-PS	EA
5. STAR WARS RACER-N64	LUCAS ARTS	10. U.F.C.-DC	CRAVE

world republic top ten games

top ten japanese titles

1. DRAGON QUEST VII	PS	6. CAPCOM vs. SNK	DC
2. DINO CRISIS 2	PS	7. KORO KORO KIRBY	CGB
3. PRO BASEBALL	PS2	8. SUPER ROBOT TAISEN 2	WS
4. KANON	DC	9. JIKKYOU WORLD SOCCER	PS
5. G-SAVIOUR	PS2	10. ROMANCE...KINGDOMS	PS2

* FROM SEP17-SEP23, 2000

top ten u.k. titles

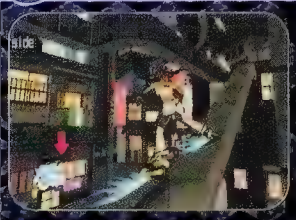
1. POKÉMON YELLOW	GB	6. COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2	PS
2. PERFECT DARK	N64	7. DEAD OR ALIVE 2	DC
3. POKÉMON BLUE	GB	8. IN COLD BLOOD	PS
4. POKÉMON RED	GB	9. W.C. SNOOKER	PS
5. WWF SMACKDOWN	PS	10. F1 2000	PS

* WEEK ENDING SEP 14, 2000

gamers' republic top ten games

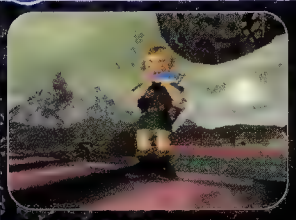
* BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH SEPTEMBER 31, 2000

d. halverson



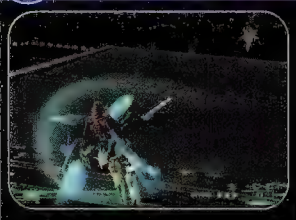
1. JET GRIND RADIO	DC
2. SKIES OF ARCADIA	DC
3. MOTO GP	PS2
4. SILPHEED: TLP	PS2
5. RED DOG	DC
6. CASTLEVANIA: COTM	GBA
7. SPAWN ITDH	DC
8. FUR FIGHTERS	DC
9. SUPER MAGNETIC NEO	DC
10. GUNGRIFFON BLAZE	PS2

b. siechter



1. ZELDA: MM	N64
2. SPYRO: YotD	PS
3. MEDAL OF HONOR UG	PS
4. DINO CRISIS	DC
5. WILD WILD RACING	PS2
6. CRASH BASH	PS
7. CAPCOM VS. SNK	DC
8. MARIO TENNIS	N64
9. SPR PUZZLE BOBBLE	PS2
10. FROGGER 2	DC

mike hobbs

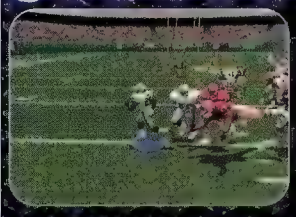


1. Z.O.E.	PS2
2. GRAN TURISMO 3	PS2
3. SKY GUNNER	PS2
4. PLANET HARRIERS	AC
5. ZELDA: MM	N64
6. GIGA WING 2	AC
7. SILPHEED: TLP	PS2
8. CASTLEVANIA: COTM	GBA
9. DRAGON BLAZE	AC
10. S. DE AMIGO 2000	AC

t. stratton

1. T HAWK'S PRO SKTR 2	PS
2. GOLDENEYE	N64
3. SPIDER-MAN	PS
4. DESTRUCTION DERBY	PS
5. RIDGE RACER V	PS2
6. NFL2K1	DC
7. GRIM FANDANGO	PC
8. UFC	DC
9. STEEL HARBINGER	PS
10. SILVER	DC

poochi



1. MADDEN 2001	PS2
2. NFL 2K1	DC
3. NHL 2001	PS2
4. NBA LIVE 2001	PS
5. NBA SHOOTOUT 2001	PS
6. NFL GAMEDAY 2001	PS
7. SEGA MARINE FISHING	DC
8. BANJO-TOOIE	N64
9. INT'L TRACK & FIELD	PS2
10. WARIO LAND 3	GBC

nelson lui

1. NFL 2K1	DC
2. FINAL FANTASY IX	PS
3. SEGA MARINE FISHING	DC
4. G-SAVIOR	PS2
5. SIMS: LIVIN' LARGE	PC
6. HALF LIFE: CS	PC
7. WWF NO MERCY	N64
8. MARIO TENNIS	N64
9. SF RUSH 2049	DC
10. CHU CHU ROCKET	DC

bob elmquist

1. NFL 2K1	DC
2. PARASITE EVE 2	PS
3. MEDAL OF HONOR UG	PS
4. SACRIFICE	PC
5. FINAL FANTASY IX	PS
6. DRAGON VALOR	PS
7. SSX SNOWBOARDING	PS2
8. TIME SPLITTERS	PS2
9. PERFECT DARK	N64
10. ZELDA: AWAKENING	GBC

c. hossman

1. CAPCOM VS. SNK	DC
2. BREATH OF FIRE IV	PS
3. ZELDA: MM	N64
4. RPG MAKER	PS
5. GRADIUS III&IV	PS2
6. FINAL FANTASY IX	PS
7. WWF NO MERCY	DC
8. MEGA MAN X5	PS
9. MEGA MAN LEGENDS 2	PS
10. KIRBY'S T&T	GBC

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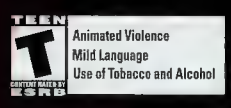

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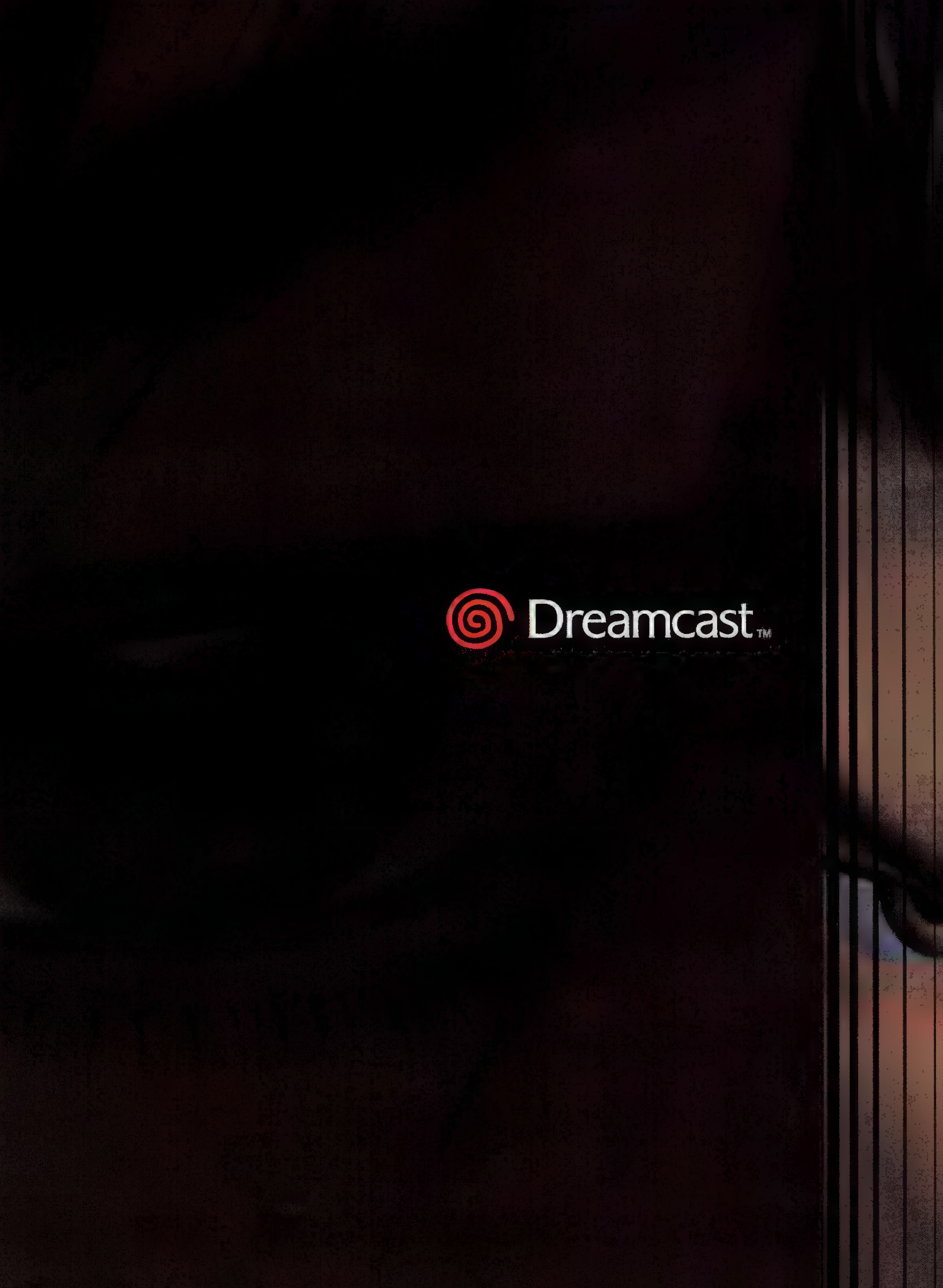
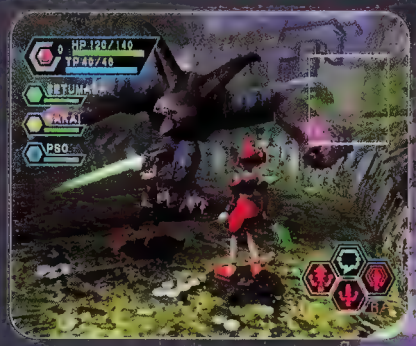

Dreamcast™

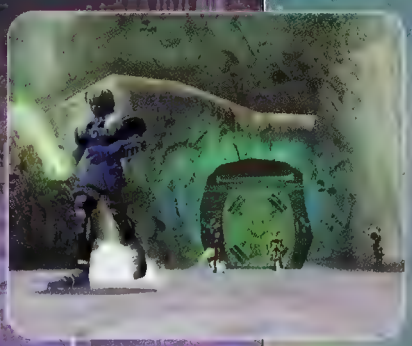
EVOLUTION OF A PHANTASY

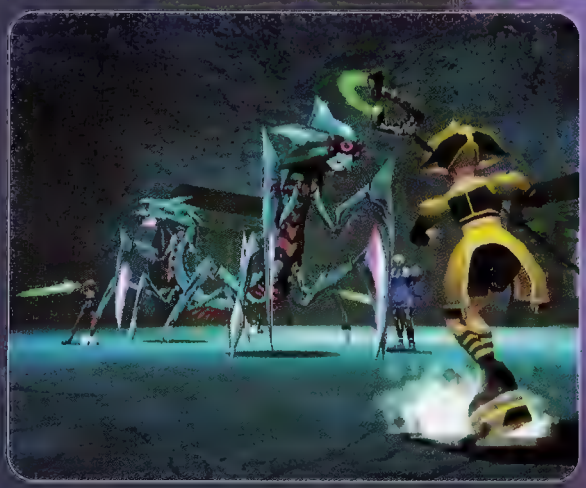
BY DAVE HALVERSON

After a six-year hiatus, Sega's flagship RPG is reborn. Can Phantasy Star Online live up to its namesake as a single-player RPG and break new ground online?

Sega's Phantasy Star first appeared in 1988 for the then-powerhouse 8-bit Sega Master System. The first console RPG to hit the U.S. videogame market, it's credited by many as the game that fashioned the modern RPG. The universe was set among the Andromeda galaxy in the Algor Solar System and its three planets—Palma, Motavia, and Dezoris. The story followed a girl named Alis and her quest to unravel the mysterious chain of events surrounding Motavia's king, Lassic, who after years of peaceful rule had suddenly become an evil tyrant. Alis' brother began to investigate the matter but was killed by Lassic's guards. With his dying breath, he handed off his sword to his sister and told her to locate Odin, a brave warrior who could help, and the history of modern role-playing began.







Besides the completely original game concept, Phantasy Star featured 3D dungeons that were astounding at the time. Maps, however, weren't even a twinkle in developers' eyes, so, with graph paper by our side, we negotiated 3D gameplay for the first time, counting steps and recording every passage.

Phantasy Star 2, arguably the best game in the series, if not one of the best 16-bit RPGs ever, followed in 1990 and was an unprecedented six megs. Taking place on Motavia, the story followed Rolf and a possible cast of four

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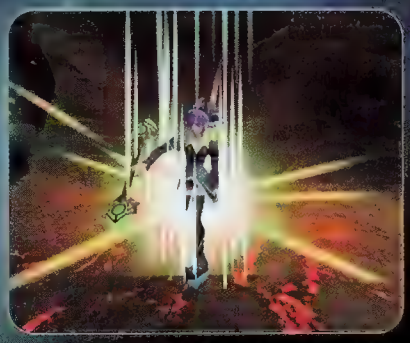
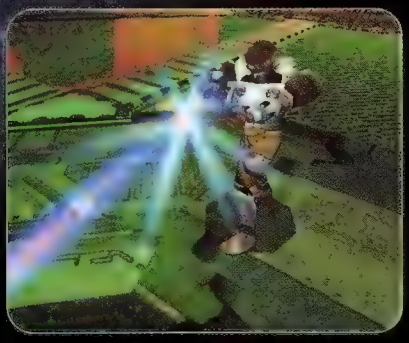


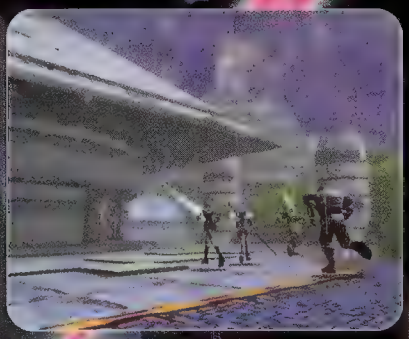


(Nei, Rudo, Amy, Shir) as they investigated the planet's malfunctioning climate control. You could finish the game with or without all of the key characters joining your party (the same will go for Phantasy Star Online). Phantasy Star 2 also featured turn-based battles where you could not only see your characters but their attacks, and introduced some of the toughest dungeons in both navigation and fighting ever traveled. I personally will never forget it: I had the flu and OD'd on Nyquil for a week, switching between Phantasy Star 2 and Street Fighter for the PC Engine. (Ever try to throw a shouryuken on a PC Engine pad?)

Phantasy Star III appeared in 1991 and I played it for all of three hours before I realized, this was no Phantasy Star. The plot had nothing to do with previous games and everything was different, from the magic system to the spell casting; I believe I went back to trying to beat Mystic Defender.

And finally (or so we believed) came Phantasy Star IV, the crowning jewel of the series and a truly remarkable achievement in 16-bit role playing. The game was 24 megs big, and we saw a return to the original universe (although the U.S. translation had some problems), phenomenal graphics, and an amazing soundtrack for the time. Who cares that the lead character's name was Chaz—it covered the entire Algor system and capped off the series with a bang. It came in a cardboard box with black and white instructions for a whopping 100 dollars (the most ever for a 16-bit game), but to this day it's my Nomad game of choice. Funny, it states clearly on the box in a big yellow burst, "The Explosive Finale!"

And so Sega's announcement of the first console-based on- and offline RPG raises some serious questions—not because of what it is, but what it's based on. The question is, what is Phantasy Star Online? The answers might surprise you. Turns out it's probably not the true sequel you hoped for, but rather, something much better. Will Sega once again change the face of role playing? We'll find out soon enough.



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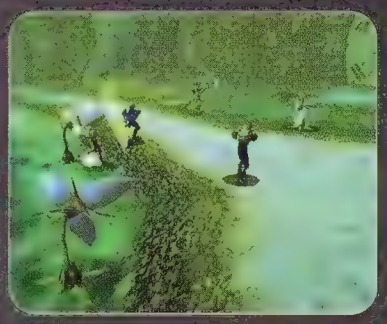


In an effort to lift the fog surrounding one of the most anxiously awaited Sega RPGs ever, we were granted an audience with Yuji Naka and the producers in Japan as well as the game's producers here at home.

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: First of all, why has it taken so long for a Phantasy Star sequel, and how long has this one been in development?

Sega of Japan: We started development last spring, but weren't thinking about a Phantasy Star sequel. We just wanted to create a network game. In the process we decided that aiming a network game at the console market, it should be a game where players can cooperate with each other, rather than fight against opponents. So we decided to create a network RPG. I imagined a sci-fi fantasy game. When we were about to finalize the rough design images, our producer, Naka, suggested we follow the universe of Phantasy Star. And as a result, Phantasy Star was to be revived as Phantasy Star Online.

GR: We are overjoyed that Phantasy Star has finally made its way back. Is PSO designed first and foremost as a single- or multiplayer game?

SOJ: It was created as a network title from the beginning.
Sega of America: The title can be enjoyed as both a single- and multiplayer game, but to fully enjoy the game, players will want to play both ways, mixing online play with their single-player adventure.

GR: Where does it fall in the series? Is this a sequel, prequel or side story?

SOJ: This title follows the universe of previous Phantasy Star series, though it is not a sequel. This story takes place on a different planet.
SOA: We don't want to give away where this falls in relation to the Phantasy Star universe at this time. However, we will say that fans of the previous series will experience several familiar elements.

GR: Being the first PS in 3D, how has the game evolved as a result? As well, how has your approach to RPG design changed?

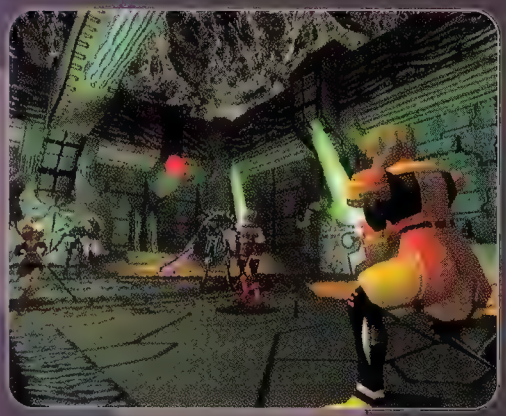
SOJ: Regarding the graphics, we were challenged to utilize the full ability of Dreamcast, and I believe we achieved that. The difference from previous series is that this one has not only the previous games nuances, but also more realism as an additional bonus.

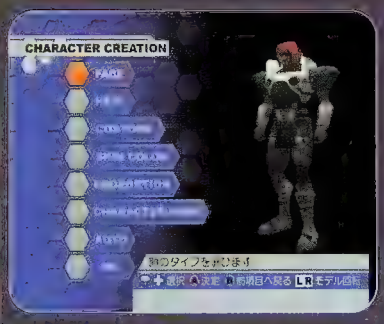
GR: How many people on the team have worked on past Phantasy Star titles?

SOJ: The team members consisted of young new members that haven't worked on the series before.

GR: In designing the online portion, has it been difficult to create an involving storyline?

SOJ: It is difficult to describe story through cinema in a multiplayer format.
SOA: However, as with all titles in the Phantasy





Star series, the story is an intricate part of the gameplay. The quests are designed in such a way so that they add to the overall story. In this way, the game can still have a sense of freedom and variety, yet at the same time there is a driving force behind the story, which players will discover as they delve deeper into the game.

GR: Is the online game like an Everquest or is it linear?

SOJ: Everquest is different. A vast number of players can play concurrently. It's a completely different type of game.
SOA: In addition, since Phantasy Star Online can be completed online, offline, or using a mixture of each, there is a lot more variety in the gameplay. Phantasy Star Online offers much of the experience that you would normally expect from an RPG. There is a main goal, many side quests, and a complete and immersive story. However, the online component adds so much more to that, encouraging global cooperation among players for the first time in a console game.

GR: Being that there are multiple quests, how diverse are they, how long, and are they linked? How many quests are there in total for each (online and single-player).

SOJ: Basically, each quest is independent yet some of them are linked as continued quests. There are dozens of quests including offline and online.
SOA: The quests are pretty diverse, having some very interesting story lines to them. We don't want to give away too much about them, but rest assured there are many hours of quality gaming.

GR: Is the main one-player game a traditional RPG experience that will please old school Phantasy Star fans?

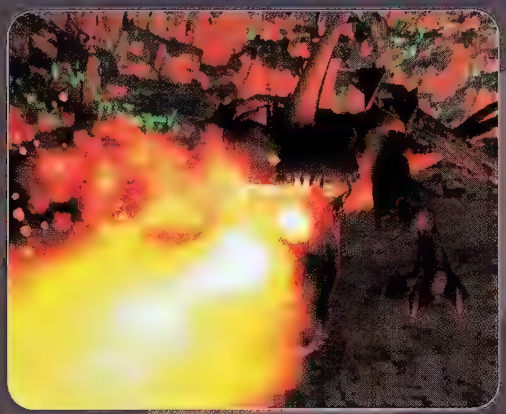
SOJ: We are aiming the new Phantasy Star towards the previous Phantasy Star's universe. There are monsters and items that have appeared in the previous series, so please keep your eyes open!
SOA: The system itself is obviously different, since the battle system is real time, but many elements of the Phantasy Star universe have been integrated that will definitely please old-school Phantasy Star fans. The Phantasy Star series is one of the definitive RPG series in gaming history. At heart, Phantasy Star Online is, first and foremost, an RPG.

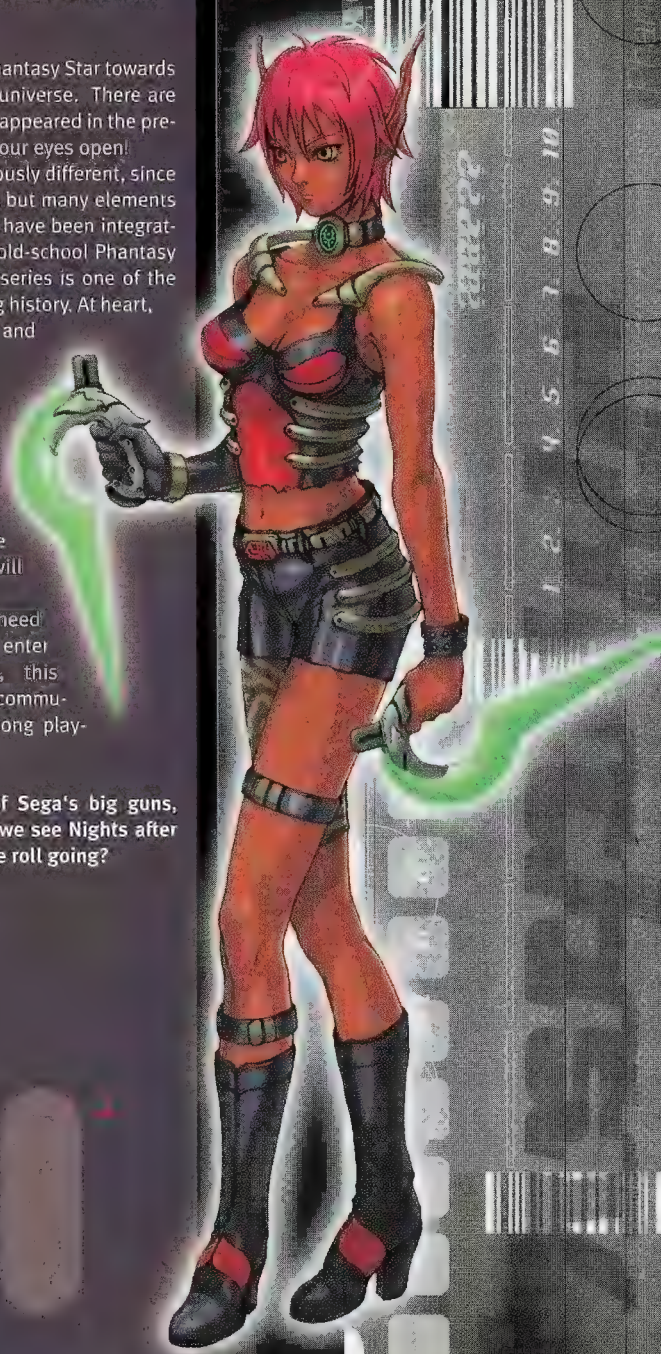
GR: How does the battle system work and is it the same for both the single-player and online games?

SOJ: The Battle system is the same for both. Battles will always occur in real time.
SOA: So players will always need to be on their toes when they enter an unknown area. Again, this emphasizes the necessity for communication and cooperation among players before and during battles.

GR: Phantasy Star is one of Sega's big guns, especially in the U.S. Might we see Nights after Sonic Adventure 2 to keep the roll going?

SOJ: No comment. GR





BEAT
Cafe de Zo
TEEN
T
Animated Violence
Mild Language
Dreamcast.

Stopping is a bad idea.

In a world of angry cops, rival taggers and lots of paint, it is important to keep moving. It's a race against time to leave your mark on the sprawling urban environment. Armed with skates, a radio and varying buyer of spray paints, it's you against the world. But you'd better be quick because the price of self expression just got higher.

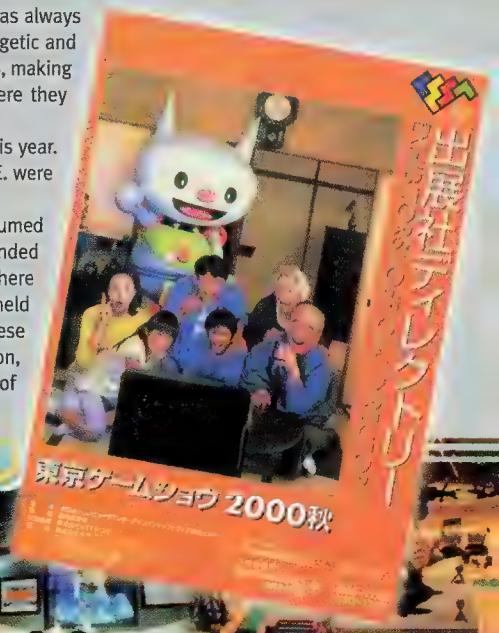
Featuring music by Rob Zombie, Jurassic 5 and Pig Hilton Mood

TGS 2000 AUTUMN TOKYO GAME SHOW

There's something a bit off about a Tokyo Game Show without Sega. The TGS has always been their chance to flex their considerable game design muscle by putting on energetic and well-informed displays. Yet this was not the case here, as Sega skipped the Autumn TGS, making their public appearance instead at the JAMMA arcade show just prior to the TGS, where they wowed us with Planet Harriers.

But I have to admit that Sony and Konami had me well distracted from Sega's absence this year. A polished Gran Turismo 3 (renamed from Gran Turismo 2000 for the U.S.) and a playable Z.O.E. were enough for me to come away from the Autumn TGS satisfied, if not ecstatic.

Inexplicably, public attendance was up at this show. With no Sega, and also no Square, I had assumed that the numbers would be down. But unless CESA is lying to us, a total of 137,400 people attended Autumn TGS, slightly more than the 131,708 that attended this spring. Some have suggested that there could have been spill-over from the highly attended plastic-model and radio-controlled vehicle show held across the street. Maybe, though one has to wonder if indeed Sega is becoming irrelevant in the Japanese market. Our informal interviews with randomly selected show goers did not seem to support this notion, as many cited the Dreamcast as their favorite system. Then again, those that go through the bother of attending TGS are not the same unwashed masses that catapulted Sony to the top.



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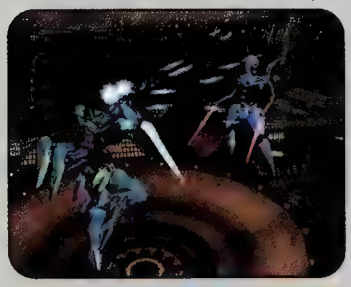
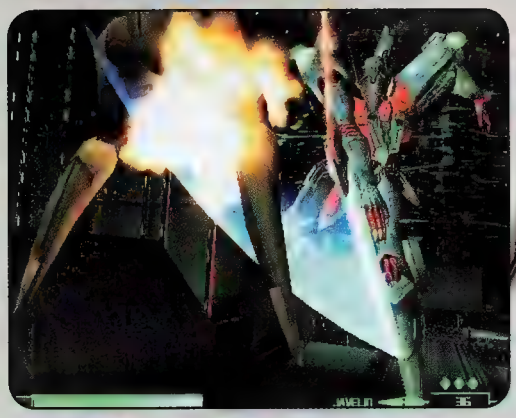
TGS COVERAGE BY MIKE HOBBS, JUN SAKAI, TATSUKI MIURA

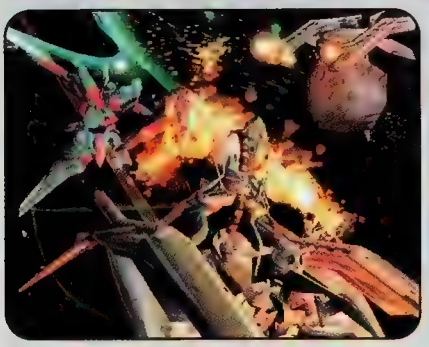
Z.O.E. GR GAME OF THE SHOW

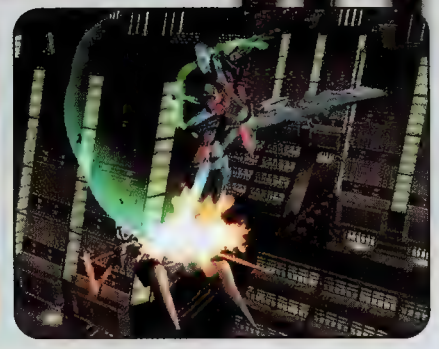
BY: KONAMI FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

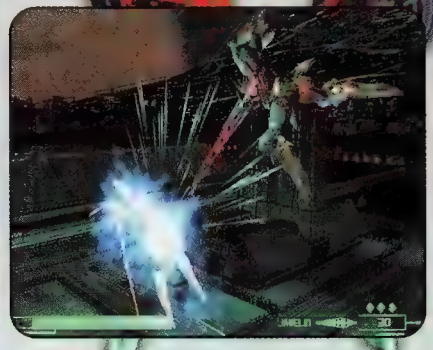
With very little glitz or glamour, Konami's Z.O.E., running on only three screens in the crowded Konami booth, easily stole our vote for game of the show. Heretofore a completely unknown quality in terms of its gameplay (is it a fighter or a shooter?), Z.O.E. revealed itself in a most spectacular fashion. Neither a shooter nor a fighter, Z.O.E. could most accurately be described as a fully 3D Virtual On. Dashing about in an open environment, you attack targets, both long and short range, with a variety of weapons, and the control and feel of the game are simply astounding. It does indeed play as good as it looks. Should we have expected less from a game being overseen by Hideo Kojima? With its anime-inspired 3D cutscenes and perfectly executed visual style, Z.O.E. is going to be an absolutely brilliant action game.







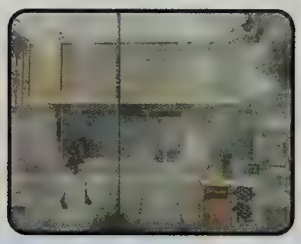




SILENT HILL 2

BY: KONAMI FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

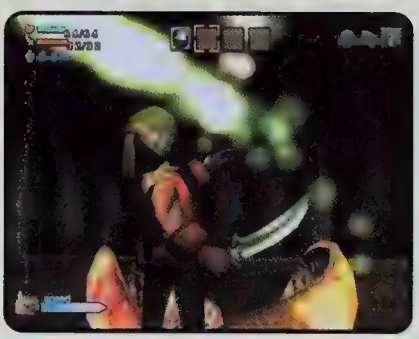
Like Z.O.E., Silent Hill 2 got a low-key demonstration. A movie featuring a mixture of real-time and rendered scenes prepared specifically for the TGS was running on one lonely screen, but that did little to dull the impact of this moody and disturbing demo. Incredible character modeling was the most impressive element shown, but it was the tone and style of the movie that stuck with us long after the show had ended. Veiled behind deep, atmospheric fog, images of twitching torsos and dream-like character interaction left us breathless.

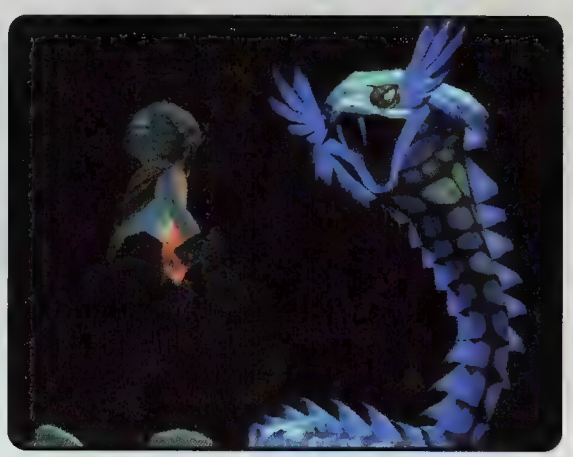


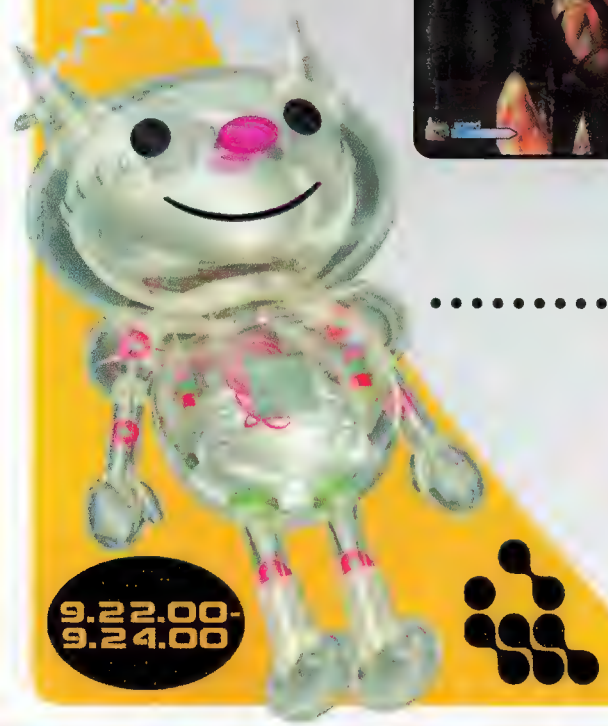
DARK CLOUD

BY: SONY FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

Sony's highly anticipated "Diorama RPG" seemed a little further along than what we saw at E3, and Dark Cloud should prove to be a very popular game when it's released this December in Japan, judging by the amount of playtime the demo stations received. The unique world-building aspect and real-time battle system were both fully functional in the TGS version, and apart from some rather low-res ground textures, the game was looking very nice indeed. As with all RPGs, only an extended play session will reveal its true nature, though the pieces seem to be coming together well.







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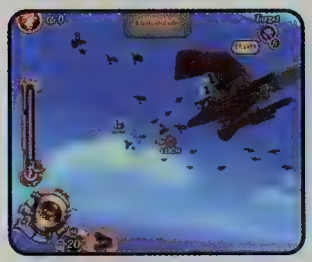
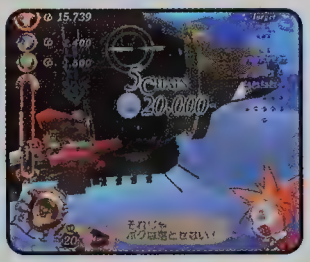
SKY GUNNER

BY: SONY FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

I was expecting and hoping to see Gran Turismo 3, but Sony's Sky Gunner stood out by virtue of being virtually unknown until the Autumn TGS. In this game, a Tail Concerto/Power Stone-like aesthetic fueled a very fun and very attractive 3D shooter. The game's built around the always-dependable lock-on style of gameplay, and you pilot these great-looking propeller-driven planes through vast skys of giant airships and floating bombers. Though slow-moving, the complete freedom of movement and lack of draw-in, at least in the level on display, imparted a wonderful sense of being airborne. There was occasional slow down and resolution dropping, but the game is early yet.

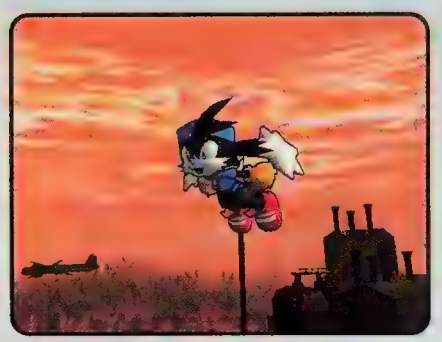


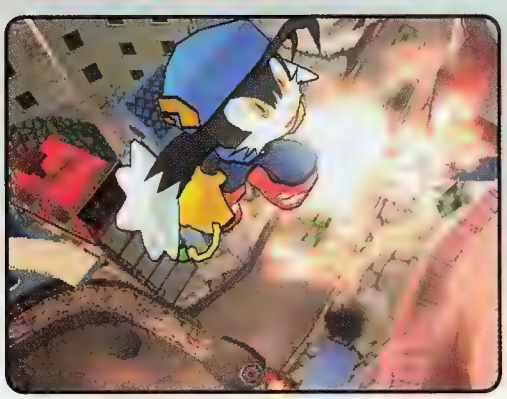


KLONOA 2

BY: NAMCO FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

After the flood of Klonoa 2 shots released prior to the Autumn TGS, I really thought that Namco's PS2 sequel would be playable on the show floor. Alas, it was not, but the looping video was at least some consolation. Make that a great consolation, as the demo showed that Namco have not taken Klonoa into a free roaming environment. As in the much loved though criminally overlooked PS original, this is a classic 2D platformer with perfectly matched 3D environments. And as the original nudged up against the limits of the PlayStation with its smooth, 60-fps visuals, so too does the sequel seem to on the PS2. Klonoa is now rendered in 3D-cell style, and the environments are full of depth and color, with all the graphical appeal of the first game. Konami could learn a thing or two about updating their classics here, Castlevania: Circle of the Moon notwithstanding.

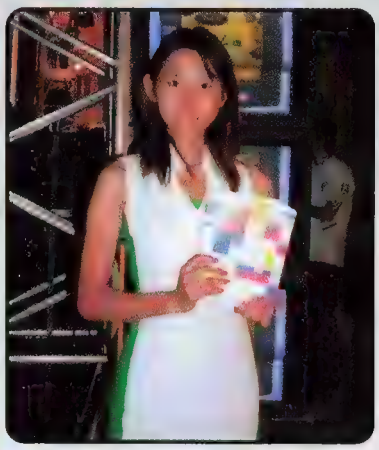




GRAN TURISMO 3

BY: SONY FOR: PLAYSTATION 2

The first sight that we had when walking into the Makuhari Messe convention center was the typically dark Sony booth and rows of Gran Turismo 3 demo stations, each with a Sparco seat, surround speakers, and new Logitech USB force feedback steering. And this is where we spent a good hour of the first day, marvelling at what Gran Turismo 2000 has become since its last public Japanese showing. In short, the game was incredible, looking like what we imagined GT would look like on PS2, and playing like an absolute dream. Six tracks and 24 playable cars gave us a great sense of how truly special GT3 is going to be. And the force feedback feature, supported by the prototype Logitech wheel on display, brought an extra element of driving pleasure to the experience (as if it needed it), reacting convincingly to kerbs impact with other cars. Gran Turismo 3 may not be due till early next year, but it's already setting the standard. Simply amazing.



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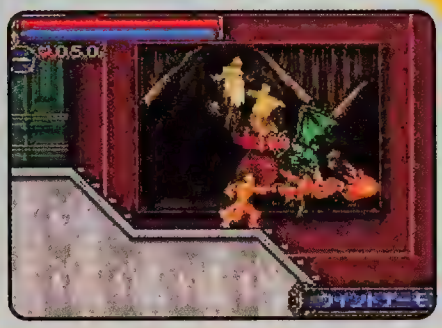
CASTLEVANIA: C.O.T.M.

BY: KONAMI FOR: GAME BOY ADVANCE

This is what Konami should have been doing with their post-32-bit Castlevania games all along. The first all-new 2D Castlevania since the legendary Symphony of the Night (and the forgettable Castlevania: Legends on Game Boy Color), Circle of the Moon looks classic with its rich, Symphony-style backgrounds and purely traditional gameplay. Sure, it would be more exciting on PS2, but we'll take a 2D Castlevania wherever we can get it. And the Game Boy Advance isn't exactly yesterday's news. Circle of the Moon is scheduled to launch with the GBA in Japan.



SHOWFLOOR INTERVIEWS

Ever wonder what the average TGS attendee owns and thinks? We did, so we nabbed a random handful of showgoers and placed these five simple questions before them:

1. **Favorite game of the show?**
2. **Favorite system?**
3. **Why hasn't the DC been completely successful in Japan?**
4. **What systems do you own?**
5. **Will you buy Gamecube or Xbox?**

Their answers may surprise you.

H.T. & S.M.

H.T. (28)

1. GT 3
2. Dreamcast
3. Sega is not good at marketing and promotion although they spend a lot of money
4. Famicom, SNES, PC engine, WS, Saturn, PS, PS2, and DC
5. Don't know yet

S.M. (21)

1. Gensou Suikoden
2. WonderSwan, because of its portability
3. Sega is not good at marketing
4. WS, PS, PS2, Saturn, and GB
5. Don't know yet

KENICHI WATANABE

1. GT3
2. PC
3. Sega is weak in marketing
4. PS, Saturn, and PC
5. Xbox because of its graphic power

HIRONORI TANAKA

1. Onimusha
2. Dreamcast, because it is easy to use
3. I don't think they are unsuccessful
4. N64, DC, PS, Saturn, Famicom, GB, WS
5. Game Cube

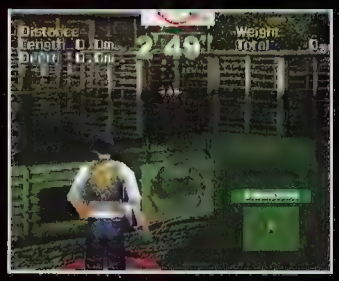
KAZUMA IWASAKI

1. Asia
2. PS
3. Not many great titles
4. I have everything except PC Engine and Mega Drive
5. Xbox

AKIHIRO SASAI

1. Guilty Gear X
2. DC
3. Graphics not that great compared to PS2
4. I have everything except NeoGeo and N64
5. Xbox

ACTION BASS



After a hard day of fishing under the sun or competing in a tournament, you look with awe at the trophies your angling skills have awarded you. In this action-packed arcade style fishing game, the player can either spend time leisurely casting across lake waters waiting for a bite on the line or they can enter an intense fishing competition where the only fish that matters is the biggest catch of the day. Along the way players will face all sorts of challenges including shifting water conditions, unstable weather and even more skilled opponents as he continually attempts to outwit the wily bass during each season of the year. Amazingly realistic fish behavior ensures that no fish is caught without a fight and that reeling in a winner delivers optimum angling action excitement.

- Tournament-style Challenge Mode, free-wheeling Free Mode, and an Extra Bonus Mode.
- Lure Action Gauge allows the player to monitor lure movement easily.
- Enjoy watching fish (up to five heaviest) you brought back in the Aquarium Mode.
- Five diverse lures are available at the beginning, covering a wide range of water conditions and lure movements. More lures will be available as the player gains experience.
- Wide variety of "lure action" possible to attract bass, some requiring retrieving or rod movements only, others requiring skillful combination of the two.

$9.99* GOT GAMER? $9.99*
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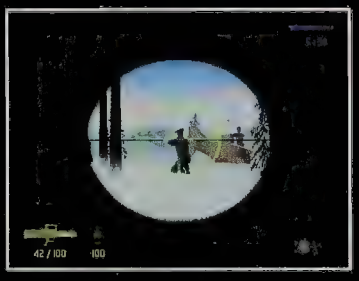
SPEC OPS:
STEALTH PATROL



Welcome to the US Army Rangers, one of the toughest and most elite of the world's military task forces. Your main objective is to control your team of Rangers and eliminate opponent targets while completing mission sub-tasks in the time allotted. Choose between stealth or all out frontal assault- it's up to you. 3D action, time pressure and realistic combat will keep you begging for more.
Immersed in huge, outdoor 3D environments you and your team members must successfully execute your tasks which revolve around several different mission objectives including reprisal attacks, seize and destroy missions, counter-terrorist attacks and raid and destroy missions. Each environment is unique, not only in look and feel, but in game play as well. With the emphasis on action and realism, navigate your team with guns blazing or silently under the cover of darkness across landscapes of thick jungle, barren desert, arctic tundra and dense forest.

Do you have what it takes? Will you be able to complete your mission, though you may be the lone survivor?

- 5 intense mission campaigns each with numerous sub-missions based on real activities carried out by the US Army Rangers
- An arsenal to choose from including shotguns, grenades, machine guns, sniper rifles and more
- 3 difficulty levels - Private (Easy), Corporal (Medium), Sergeant (Difficult) offers massive replay value
- In the 2 Ranger option the player has simultaneous control of 2 Rangers
- Create an inventory filled with hi-tech equipment to aid the Rangers in their tasks - GPS navigation for moving through dense landscape, tripwire mines to booby trap enemies, nightvision goggles for stealth accuracy, med kits for injury repair and more

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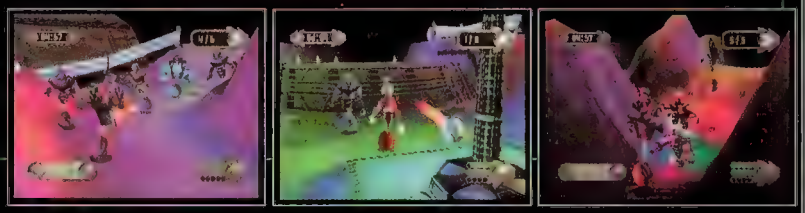
BALL BREAKERS

Roll with the punches! Roll over the competition!

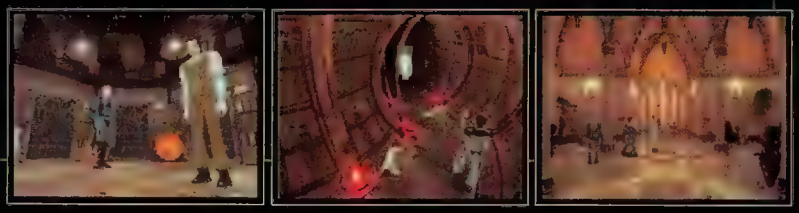


SPIN JAM

Ultra-addictive arcade action puzzler!!!!!!!!!!

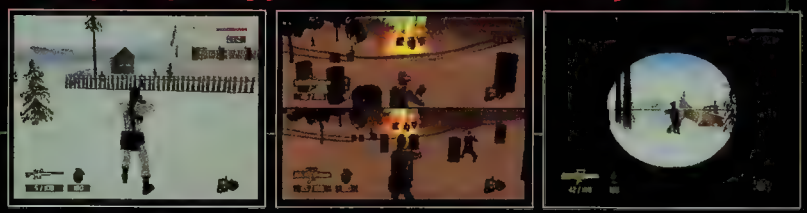
MARTIAN GOTHIC

Horror on an intergalactic scale!



SPEC OPS: STEALTH PATROL

The enemy is expecting you tomorrow. You're already there!



PRO-PINBALL BIG RACE USA

Pro Pinball: Big Race USA delivers more adrenaline-pumping action than your brain can handle!

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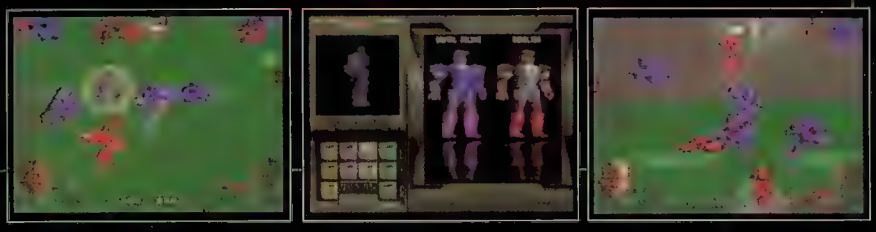
SPEEDBALL 2100

Extreme sports have been taken to the next Level!



GRUDGE WARRIORS

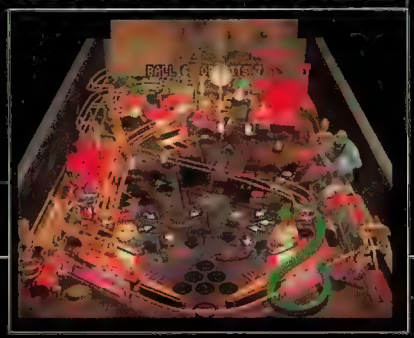
There is no such thing as friendly fire.

ACTION BASS

Pulse pounding white knuckle action of bass fishing is here!!

PRO-PINBALL
FANTASTIC JOURNEY

Steam powered time travel will whisk you away into the world of pinball.



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PRODUCTS RANGE FROM EVERYONE TO TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation

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• volition • publisher: thq • available: october

SUMMONER

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

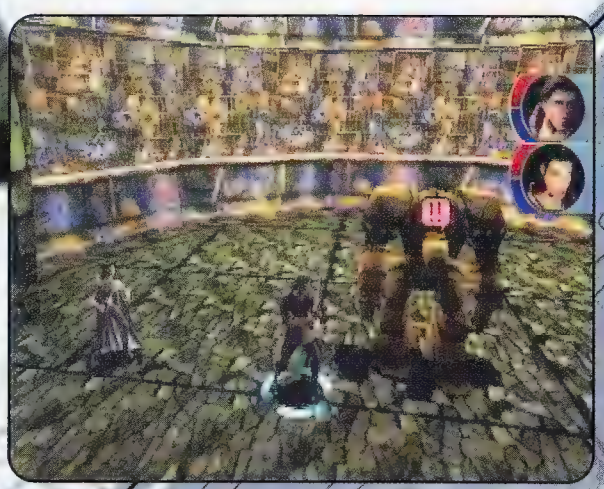
An epic quest and a fully realized world highlight this ambitious RPG. Let's hope the gameplay can match

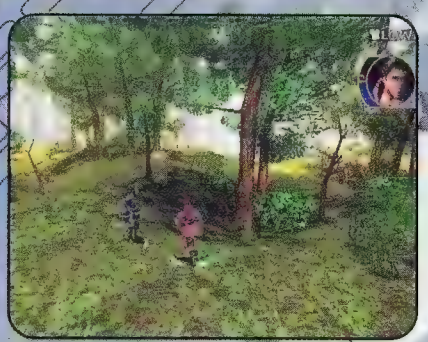
Summoners are beings with immense power. Wielding the ability to bring forth monsters, Summoners are both revered and feared, as they can use that power to vanquish evil or send the world into chaos. Such is the concept behind THQ's PS2 RPG Summoner. Although summoning monsters isn't anything new (just ask Square), basing an entire RPG around it makes for a most intriguing premise. At this point, though, it's unclear whether it will evolve into a solid game.

Summoner is nothing if not ambitious. The environments seen early in the game are absolutely enormous; the capital city's bigger than some entire games. Cities feature block after block of shops and houses, and interactive citizens and guards constantly mill about. The architecture and layouts actually feel like something from medieval times, and rats scurry about the slums and alleyways, even stopping to scratch and clean themselves. The overall impact is that Summoner is as close to a fully realized virtual world as anything that's ever been produced.

Unfortunately, the visuals don't quite back up the design at this point. The game is plagued with terrible pop-up, and the models and textures look more like N64. The combat system could also use some work. Right now, battles take place more or less automatically, as both the main character and additional party members will hack and slash enemies without any player input (although you occasionally have to remind the hero to draw his sword). You can initiate chain combos, sort of like in Vagrant Story, but right now just trading hits with the enemy is more effective. Of course, you can also use numerous spells, the most notable being the summons. By equipping various rings, you can call forth numerous elemental monsters that join you in battle by automatically attacking your foes. And it's not just a glorified spell, either: they actually act like extra party members with their own AI.

Hopefully THQ and Volition will magically work the flaws out of this game before it's released, because it's obvious that Summoner was designed with an epic mentality in mind. I'd like to see the looks and gameplay match. GR





PlayStation 2

湾岸 MIDNIGHT CLUB STREET RACING

You know the rules, there are no rules.

RELEASE DATE: PLAYSTATION 2 LAUNCH

CUTTING EDGE SOUNDTRACK FROM SOME OF THE WORLD'S LEADING TECHNO/DRUM AND BASS ARTISTS - DOM AND ROLAND, DERRICK MAY AND SURGEON

Race across two accurately modeled cities - New York and London!

Win the pink slips of opposing players! Rise up through the ranks in the illicit world of the Midnight Club.

Play in a persistent world with interactive traffic, pedestrians and law enforcement.

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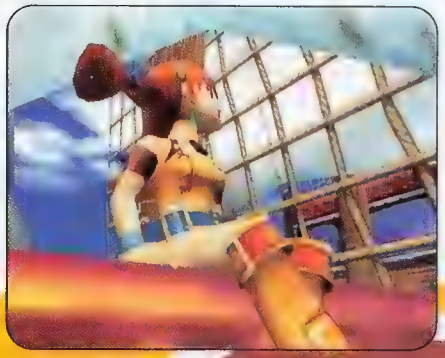
SKIES OF ARCADIA

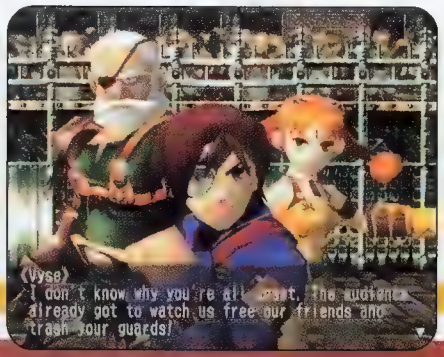
BY DAVE HALVERSON

Join Vyse, Aika and one of the most inspired casts in Sega role-playing history on the adventure of a lifetime through the skies of Arcadia

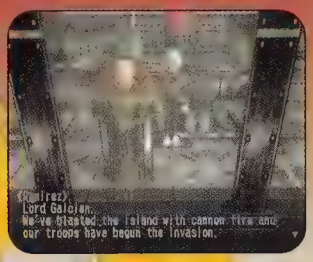
In the Age of Exploration, two types of Air Pirates fill the sky: Blue Rogues, noble pirates who steal from the rich to help those in need (and themselves; they are pirates after all); and Black Pirates, scoundrels who attack anything in the sky. Blue Rogues raid, capture, and later release prisoners. Black Pirates pillage and murder. Ruling over them both and all dominions (or trying to at least) is her royal highness Teodora, empress of the Valuan Empire. She controls the mighty Imperial Armada commanded by the Darth Vader-like supreme commander Galcian and his six admirals.

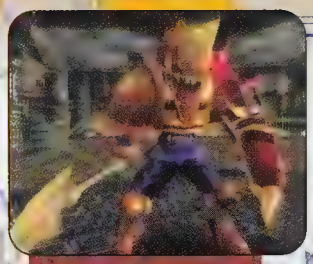
As Skies of Arcadia opens, we find one of those admirals, Alfonso, son of Valua's most distinguished family, chasing a small craft piloted by a mysterious young girl. Attacking her relatively tiny craft with concussion grenades, they take her alive. No sooner, they are attacked by the Blue Rogues, headed by captain Dyne, father of Vyse, who journeys with his female friend, Aika. The Blue Rogues, with Vyse taking the lead, eventually capture Alfonso's ship and take the girl, who we come to know as Fina, a citizen of the Silver Civilization. We soon discover that Fina is a key player (or pawn) in the Empress' plan to rule Arcadia's skies and the main source of energy, moon stones, pieces of the moon that fall onto floating islands where they are recovered and used as fuel and the catalyst for weapons.





Back home on Pirate Island, Fina is accepted by the Air Pirates and befriends





Imperial Armada

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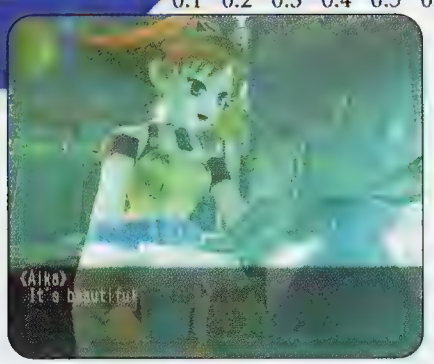

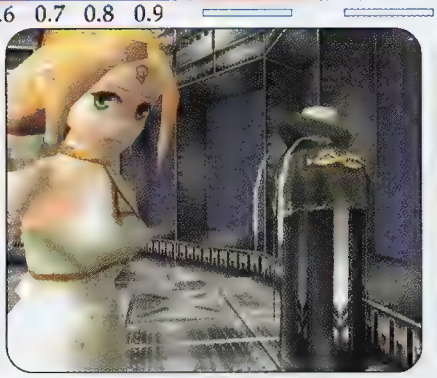

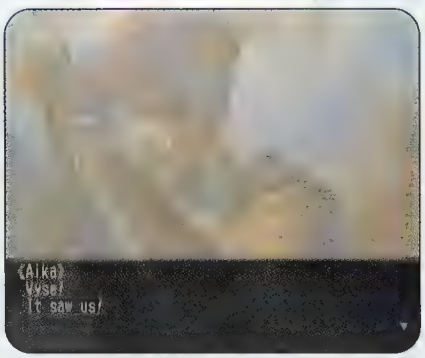

Vyse and Aika, who soon depart to recover a moon stone they saw crash on a nearby island the night before. While they are away, Pirate Island is attacked by the Imperial Armada in retaliation for swiping Fina. Vastly outnumbered, they must surrender to stay alive and all of the men are taken to Valua along with Fina where the worst imaginable fate awaits. Though the odds are stacked against them, Vyse and Aika take chase, giving birth to what promises to be one of the greatest Sega RPGs ever created.

Skies is obviously the successor to the throne vacated by Sword of Vermillion and Phantasy Star and features one of the best casts in Sega role-playing history. The universe is Sega's best since Panzer Saga, and the character designs leave me almost speechless. Through facial expressions, these characters actually show emotion. Gone are the painted-on faces of the 32-bit era, replaced by little polygonal actors. At every turn, I'm witnessing real-time events that once existed solely as CG cinema, and when the real-time cut scenes do merge with the game, they weave together a convincing overall sense of story. I can get used to this.

There are two types of battles in Skies: standard turn-based, and new air battles where pirate ships square off and let the cannon balls fly. During sky battles, a grid is displayed that allows you to establish a

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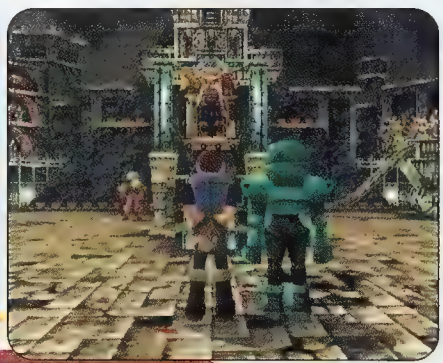

SHENMUE

BY MIKE HOBBS

The sheer ambition of Shenmue is staggering, as Yu Suzuki attempts nothing less than a living virtual world on Dreamcast

For the longest time, I was baffled by the lack of success afforded to the Japanese release of Shenmue. The hype was brilliant, and all indications were that a new paradigm was coming from Sega. Shenmue was to be their Final Fantasy, a game from which they could hang all manner of sequels and ancillary MIXs. But the reality of the game's actual performance in the market place was far more muted. How muted, you ask? Seaman outsold Shenmue. Now, everyone generally agrees that Seaman's performance was somewhat anomalous, but the fact remains that Shenmue only sold to about one in seven Japanese DC owners, a figure well below what Sega had predicted and so desperately needed to help offset Shenmue's enormous cost. Sega knew going in that it was to be the sequels where all the money was going to be made, but still, Shenmue's weak performance was sobering to say the least.

And as I sat there playing the Japanese version over last Christmas, I had to ask myself, "Why isn't this game the sensation that everyone thought it would be?" The game just seemed so revolutionary, both visually and conceptually. It was something really new, a living world, a stunning virtual reality of small town Japan inhabited by dozens and dozens of seemingly alive characters.

And perhaps even more ambitiously, Yu Suzuki set out to make Shenmue a game that could be played by nearly everyone. The hardcore may have moaned, but this was a worthy

and important goal not to be scoffed at, and the evidence I had was that he had succeeded. Everyone, gamers and non-gamers alike seemed to enjoy playing Shenmue. The game's combination of frequent character interaction, amusing time killing devices within the world (playable versions of Space Harrier, Hang On, slot machines, and darts), and easy to grasp real time battle and Dragon's Lair-like Quick Timer Events all had broad appeal.

Naturally, I was dying to play the game in English. How would all these elements come together in a form that I could fully understand? And finally I got my first in-depth look at the localized version of Shenmue. Excitement and apprehension were both high: excitement over fully grasping the game's plotting, structure, and flow, and apprehension over how the dub would be handled.

Let's start with the latter. I breathed a huge sigh of relief over this dub. It's actually good for the most part. Ryo, the lead, in particular is well cast, and there is suitable attention to detail, as Japanese words and names are pronounced properly. Sure, some of the myriad secondary characters aren't quite as convincing, but overall this is a good presentation.

As for the former, I am finally beginning to understand what it was that stopped Shenmue from becoming the phenomenon that it seemed destined to. When I played the Japanese version, the mystery and allure of the game was very high. It seemed so expansive and non-linear, and I felt that I was part of something much larger. When I would finally make it to the next adrenaline pumping Quick Timer Event or real-time battle, I felt a huge sense of accomplishment.

But now that I've had the chance to play the game in English, I am a little disappointed by how straightforward the game actually is. Certainly it's no more linear than any other modern Japanese RPG, but it's true that Shenmue is less of a free-form virtual reality than I originally thought.

But before I begin to sound too down on the game, I must say that it is still an incredible experience and a staggering

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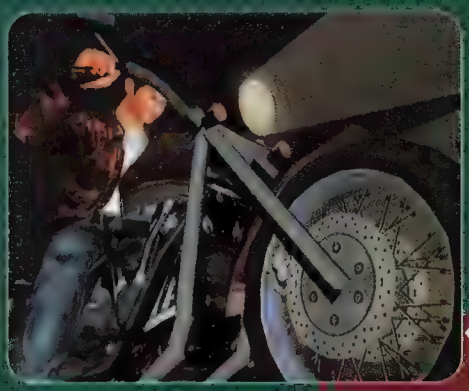

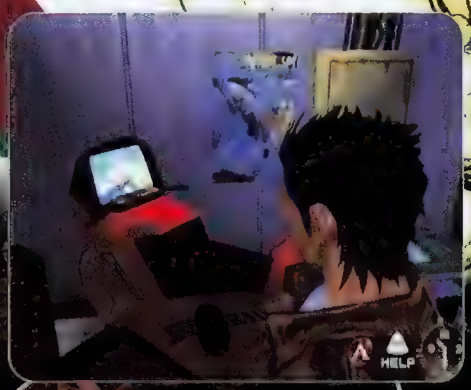

PlayStation.2

RELEASE DATE: PLAYSTATION 2 LAUNCH

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- Real Time Damage Models allow you to watch the parts fly as you pay the price for punishing collisions!

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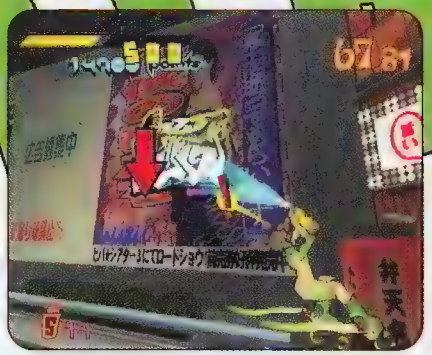


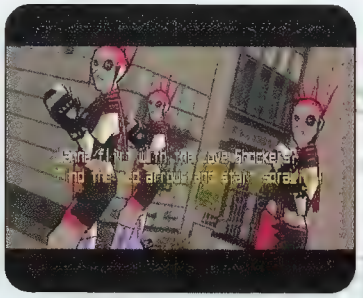
JET GRIND RADIO

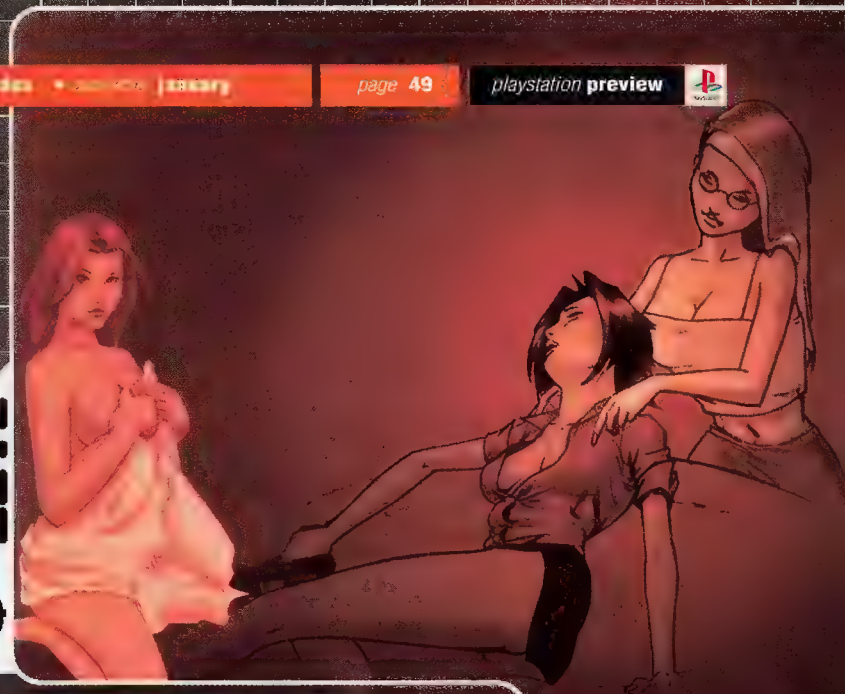
BY DAVE HALVERSON

Super tunes, super vibe, super graphics, super unique. Sega continues to pump out original content that just can't be beat

Jet Grind Radio is about the coolest thing going on any platform—period. It's also one of the best applications of 3D game design—if not the crowning jewel of the genre—that I have ever experienced. I know you'll want to string me up for stating this, but modern skateboarding and BMX games pale sadly in comparison to what Jet Grind brings to the 3D arena. The combination of the sprawling cities and burrows, unconfining interactive playgrounds that are alive with activity, the cooler-than-it-really-is Japanese rendition of our skating vibe and tagging, and the music they've put to it (a dance mix that poops on most of MTV's latest toiletries) is simply unbeatable. These tunes echo a freshness and newness that used to be celebrated by the media, before they sold their souls to boy bands and belly buttons.

The U.S. Grind has been lovingly tweaked in the localization process, picking up a new character – Piranha, (roughly Scary Spice on skates) some new graffiti designs, and a few needed gameplay refinements—like better defining the tagging spree where you need to chase down and tag the Poison Jams. SoA is improving on an already spectacular game. The addition of a new area (!), with Rob Zombie accompaniment no less, has yet to be seen but is lurking in the final somewhere I'm sure. I only wish the localization process were complete so that I could give Jet Grind the A it so adamantly deserves before it hits store shelves this October. Then again, I suppose I just did. Check back for the review anyway, if not for the pretty layout, then to hear me gush some more about one of 2000's very best. **GR**





FEAR EFFECT 2

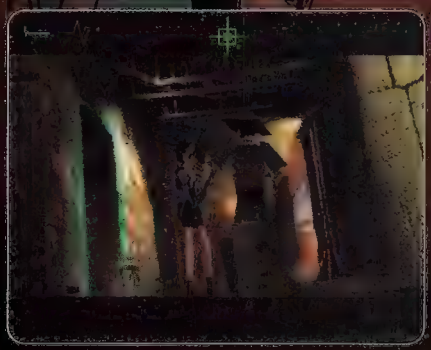
BY DAVE HALVERSON

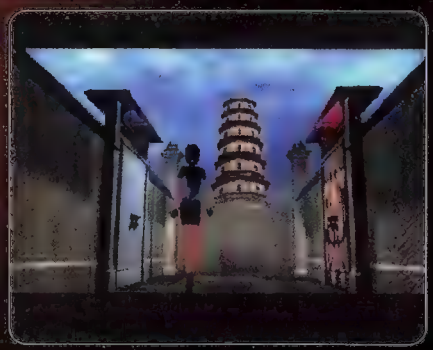
Join two killer babes who kill in a high-stakes game of murder and intrigue. Hana Vachel and Rain Qin have no fear

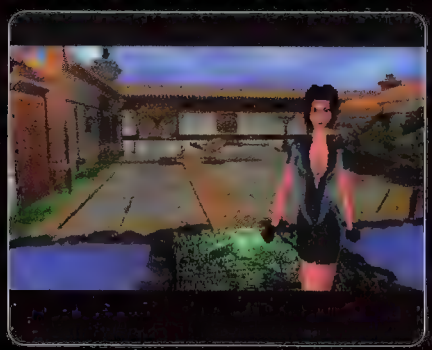
After a lengthy foray into the once ferocious fighting game arena, Kronos finally hit pay dirt with last year's dark fable, Fear Effect. Taking polygonal gameplay set among prerendered backgrounds to new heights, they fashioned what stands as one of 1999's best PlayStation games and laid the ground work for a series with massive long-term appeal.

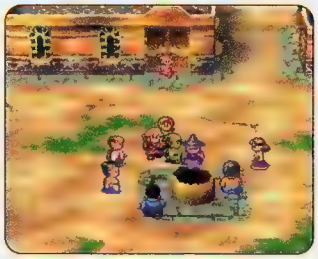
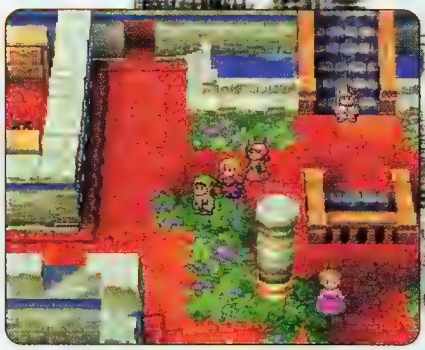
Fear Effect sort of dropped us into a meat grinder. You weren't sure how Hana Tsu-Vachel became a beautiful assassin, you just knew she had a job to do. A prequel, Fear Effect 2, tells us how she got there and what brought her together with Royce Galas and Jacob DeCourt. She also has a new female friend in FE2 who's dead sexy, Rain Quin. I hear her twin sister Mist is a real hellcat. What, Dad was a weatherman?

FE2 takes us through Alternate Hong Kong (you know the place), the Mountain Island of the Immortals, The Walled City of Xi'an, The Lost Tomb of the Last Emperor of China, Hells Kitchen, and Peng Lai Shan, where Rain's evil twin sister awaits. The game uses what they call Motion FX 3D Technology (that's polygons that look like anime characters to you and me), and this time out they look even more spectacular than before. There are 120 minutes of cinema, no load times (!) and all of the puzzles and crazy killin' you loved about the first game times ten. On top of that, replaying the game will spawn a different set of enemies and open hidden features, and best of all, the new real-time inventory system takes the hassle out of finding that UZI 9mm when you really need it. Sounds great, looks great, plays great. The PlayStation marches on. GR







DRAGON WARRIOR VII

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

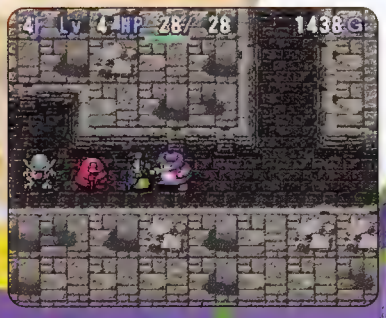
It's been a long time coming, but the wait is over. Japan's number-one RPG series has finally hit PlayStation

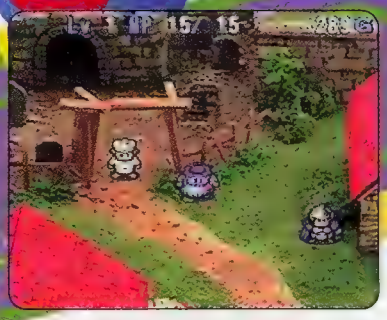
Few things in the video-gaming industry are as big as the release of a new Dragon Warrior game. Recently released in Japan, Dragon Warrior VII (known there as Dragon Quest VII) broke record after record, causing fans to line up for blocks, selling more than 3.9 million copies to date (compared to FF9's 2.8 million), and garnering a nearly perfect score from leading Japanese gaming pub Famitsu.

So what makes this game so good that it helped boost the Japanese economy? Part of it has to be the game's old-school appeal. Dragon Warrior VII is nothing if not a throwback to the old days of RPGs, with its traditional fantasy feel, hand-drawn characters and turn-based menu-driven combat. True, DW7 looks like it was done on the SNES (the animations could have been done in RPG Maker) and the fully rotatable 3D landscapes aren't terribly impressive, but I suppose we can forgive that considering the game has been in development for 20 years or something like that. Besides, DW7 is filled with lush, vibrant colors and details that exude a charm I haven't felt since the days of 16-bit. As with the previous Dragon Warrior games, the characters were designed by Akira Toriyama (of DragonBall Z fame), and his unique style shines through, despite the small sprites. The well-animated 2D enemies are particularly nice.

DW7 also boasts an absolutely massive quest. The adventure starts on a small island, but it doesn't take long before your group of heroes uncovers mysterious ruins that feature warp gates to numerous new lands, each filled with quests, enemies, items and NPCs to interact with. What's more, the gameplay is more interactive than your average RPG. Much like in Legend of Zelda, you'll have to push blocks to complete puzzles and you can pick up and throw objects; heck, when you lift up a jar, it even sounds like Zelda on the SNES. Eventually you'll have parties of up to five characters, complete with unique spells and techniques, and you'll even be able to change job classes. The depth of DW7 promises to be unmatched: after playing the game for days and immersing myself in its world, I feel I've barely scratched the surface.

Although Dragon Warrior VII probably won't produce quite the numbers in the U.S. that it did overseas, the game is set to be a true epic for fans who can look beyond its classically-styled exterior. **GR**





WORLD OF DRAGON WARRIOR

TORNEKO THE LAST HOPE

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

A quest filled with nasty monsters and deadly dungeons awaits Dragon Warrior's pudgy shopkeeper

The kingdom is in trouble. Monsters are starting to appear everywhere, and grassy fields that were once safe for a nice stroll have been transformed into "magical dungeons" where danger lurks at every turn. Only one person is man enough to stand up to this evil: Torneko. That's right, Torneko. Long-time RPG fans will no doubt recognize Torneko as the chubby, mustachioed, Mario-esque shopkeeper from Dragon Warrior IV (though he was called Taloon in the U.S.), and now he's on the PlayStation in his own great adventure called World of Dragon Warrior: Torneko, The Last Hope.

Similar to games like Chocobo's Magic Dungeon, Torneko falls into that category of quasi-RPGs where the emphasis is on dungeon exploration and not epic story-telling. In his quest to stop the monsters from overrunning the kingdom, Torneko explores dungeon after dungeon, through caves and fields and haunted buildings. Every dungeon Torneko visits is randomly generated, so the layouts are never the same, and the enemies and weapons show up in new places. Like other games in this sub-genre, you begin every dungeon at experience level one, and you have to build up your character's strength and acquire weapons each time to survive. Since the enemies attack and move around the maps with each action Torneko makes, you'll have to use a lot of strategy as you fight and explore, or else you'll wind up back at the beginning without any experience or equipment.

Dragon Warrior fans will be pleased to know that the excellent character designs by Akira Toriyama have returned in Torneko, and famous enemies like slimes and wyverns are back as well. The detailed claymation backgrounds are lovely in their 2D splendor, and the fairly large sprites look better than those in Dragon Warrior VII. Torneko sold by the millions in Japan; we'll soon see if that translates to success here. GR

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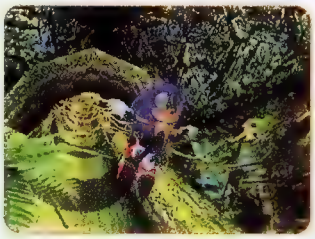
SONIC ADVENTURE 2

preview by c. hoffman • dev: sonic team • pub: sega • avail: 2001

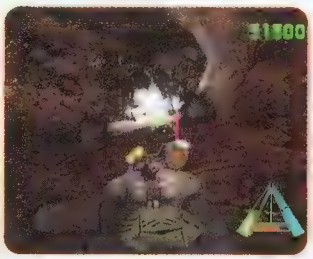
Sega is finally beginning to spill the info on Sonic Adventure 2, and it looks like the blue blur will be better than ever. Like in the first game, players will be able to control multiple characters, including Sonic and Knuckles, and Sonic Team has strongly hinted that Dr. Robotnik, in his new Egg Mobile walker, will be playable. This time the adventure starts in a splendid-looking city (after Sonic's sky-surfing drop down from a helicopter), and then continues in a wealth of gorgeous environments including a lush jungle, a futuristic factory, freaky ancient ruins, mountainous areas and an underwater zone. The characters will even have new moves, like Knuckles' spinning uppercut and a grind move for Sonic that lets him slide down rails and access hidden areas. These phenomenal new screens are surely just a mere hint of the wonders that are to follow. Of course, we can't even begin to pass any concrete judgement, but the game is already looking tremendously improved over the brief teaser shown at E3. GR

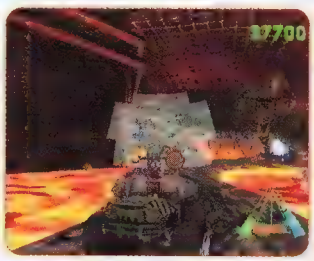


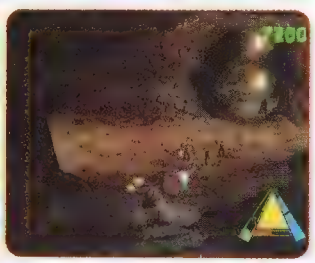
RED DOG

preview by d. halverson • dev: argonaut • pub: crave • avail: october

Well surprise, surprise! It lives! I've been asking Sega about Red Dog since I first spotted it at E3 '99 and had pretty much lost all hope. So when it was dropped on my desk the day we put this issue to bed, I was at once stoked and somewhat worried (usually when games come out of nowhere it's because they have problems). So imagine my astonishment when after just a few minutes of gameplay, I realized that Red Dog is one of the best Dreamcast games I've played this year. With smooth 60-fps animation, huge non-clipping environments, awesome music, cool missions, big bosses, a truly inspired interface, and one hella' cool off-road assault vehicle to its credit, Red Dog is sure to be the sleeper hit of the fall. I'd say this is Argonaut's best since StarFox (although I dug Croc, Croc 2, and Buck Bumble). Look for a full-on review next month. Watch, it'll be like an hour long! Doh! GR



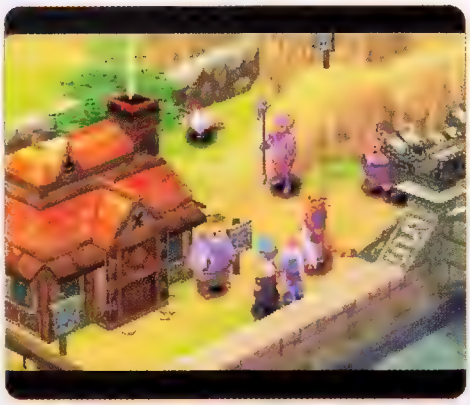




BREATH OF FIRE IV

preview by c. hoffman • dev/pub: capcom • avail: november

It's been a few months since we looked at the latest in Capcom's hit RPG series, Breath of Fire IV. Now that we've played a near-complete U.S. version, we're happy to say that the game is shaping up to be every bit as good as we imagined. This time players control two main dragon-man characters—Ryu and Fou-Lu—with intertwining destinies. Ryu is a mysterious boy who doesn't know where he came from or where he's going, and he finds himself caught up helping Princess Nina search for her sister in a land where a tenuous peace exists between the Alliance nations and the Empire. Fou-Lu is an ancient emperor who has just returned to this world, and while his true motives aren't clear, the power unleashed when he and Ryu meet could change the world forever. Aside from the intriguing story, BOF4 also offers incredible hand-drawn characters with awesome animation set in a 3D world (much like BOF3) and tons of mini-games to keep the action fresh. Plus there are loads of spells and special abilities, combo magic attacks, and master characters to train under, providing all the variety and depth fans of the series have come to expect. GR



DEAD OR ALIVE 2 HARDCORE

preview by b. fiechter • dev/pub: tecmo avail: october 26

Tecmo has taken an arcade-perfect version of Dead or Alive 2 and made it even better by adding a few new levels, moves and costumes. Most of the new levels are accessed in Tag mode, where before only one arena was available for group competition. Other areas have also been expanded in the Story mode, like the outdoor area in the dojo, and, my personal favorite, the city streets below the rooftop Chinatown stage. Because of the true sense of 3D space, the ability to interact with the arena and crash through walls and floors, Dead or Alive 2 Hardcore takes on a completely different visual dynamic than Tekken Tag, its only immediate rival. Those who have played the Dreamcast version already know how good Dead or Alive 2 is; play this newest version on PlayStation 2, and you'll find even more to like. GR

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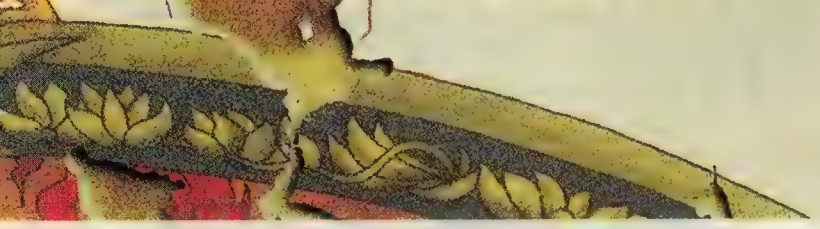


"The level of detail paid to every single moment, circumstance and environment is overwhelming."
Official Dreamcast Magazine

"...undeniably the prettiest role-playing game ever to grace a console."
www.dailyradar.com

"...this will indeed be the first epic RPG on Dreamcast."
www.ign.com

"Grandia II is easily the most impressive next-generation RPG we've seen, and the first true RPG epic for a next-generation console."
www.thegia.com

"Take a new look at what is surely the best-looking RPG yet on a next-generation console..."
Gamer's Republic Online

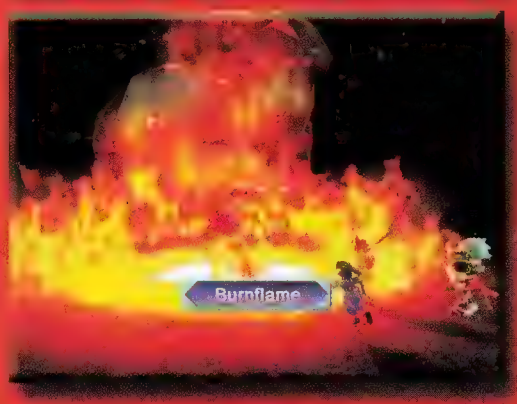
"...set to give sub-par developers a lesson in how to do a DC RPG right."
GameFan Magazine

"Any RPG fan would be insane to miss out on this fantastic gameplay experience and it could go far in converting those who previously rode the RPG fence."
GamerWeb.com

"If you want your copy of Grandia 2 this holiday season, don't expect Santa's little elves to make you a special copy, pre-order it now or you may not get it until late January."
www.GA-Console.com

Critically acclaimed and over 2 years in the making, Grandia™ II arrives December 2000.

Katsumi Aizaki and Masashi Hazama. Ubi Soft Entertainment and the Ubi Soft logo are registered trademarks of Ubi Soft, Inc. Sega,



GRANDIA II

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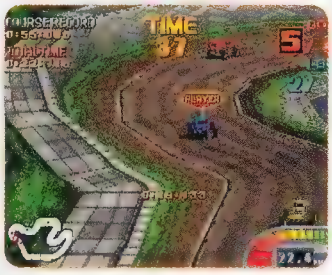
RC DE GO

preview by d. halverson • dev: taito • pub: acclaim • avail: november

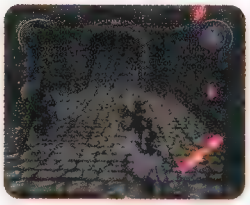
I've played enough RC racing games to know that Acclaim's RC De Go is about as good as they come—no surprise given that it's from Taito (Darius, Ninja Warriors), one of Japan's most respectable small developers. The game has a look all its own, reminiscent of Gran Turismo's replays oddly enough, and the dual analog control makes it a natural for both RC enthusiasts or anyone who's ever stood at the arcade playing Sprint until their knees buckled. The simple yet effective interface offers beginner, intermediate or expert difficulty, on- or off-road play, and then it's pretty much go time. The R button activates a turbo boost that doubles as an attack if you're close enough to a rival, otherwise, like all good RC racing simulations, RC De Go is an exercise in steering finesse. The only thing that De Go has going against it is what it is—an RC racing game on a system that already has a bunch to its credit. Whatever market is out there should not hesitate to give it a De Go. GR

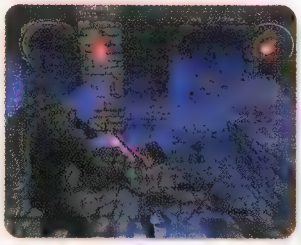


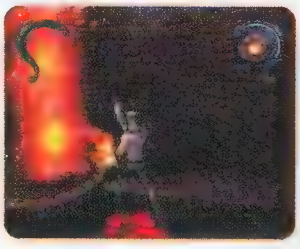
W. OF MIGHT & MAGIC

preview by s. thomason • dev/pub: 3do • avail: fall

Heralding the Might & Magic franchise into the next generation of game consoles, Warriors of M&M is a 3D action-RPG with a heavy emphasis on the action—a wide variety of weapons and spells are used to decimate your opponents through a new fighting system designed specifically for this title. While many of the locales are dark and atmospheric, it remains to be seen if this game can restore the Might & Magic name after the disastrous Crusaders on PlayStation. GR



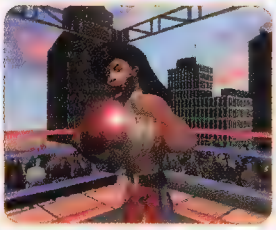


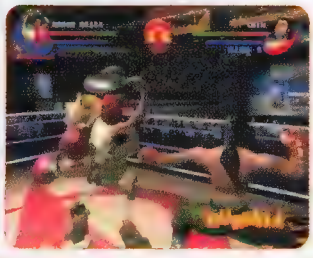


READY 2 RUMBLE 2

preview by c. hoffman • dev: midway • pub: midway • avail: november

We brought you the latest on R2R2 back in issue 28 based on our time with the DC version, but now we have the PS2 game in house for you to feast your eyes on. This version of R2R2 features 20 boxers, including celebrity characters Michael Jackson and Shaquille O'Neal, plus nine returning faves and wacky new fighters like Freak E. Deke (a Mohawk-wearing punk), Wild Stubby Coreley (a cowboy), Mama Tua (Salua's enormous wife!?) and Freedom Brock (hippie). Pacer fans may need to pick this game up just so they can lay the smack down on Shaq. GR

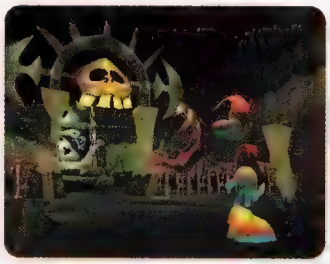


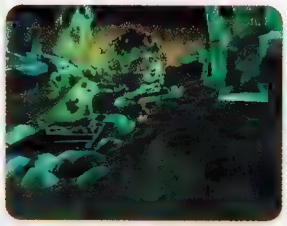


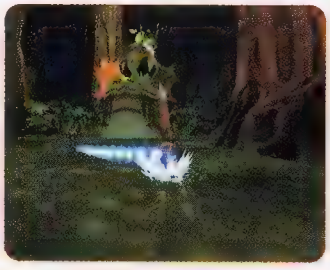
RAYMAN 2

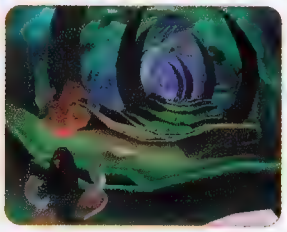
preview by b. fiechter • dev/pub: ubi soft • avail: february

One of my favorite games on Dreamcast will hopefully find the success it deserves on PlayStation 2. While sharing many of the same inspired qualities that saturated the DC version, Rayman 2: Revolution is undergoing a few nips and tucks to improve the integrity of its presentation, while receiving a couple new levels as well. Enemies are being given a bit more bite and will be more prevalent, and the game as a whole will be slightly more difficult and harder edged. Rayman 2 was a truly special creation; I can't imagine it getting any better. GR





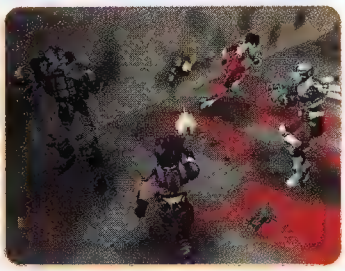
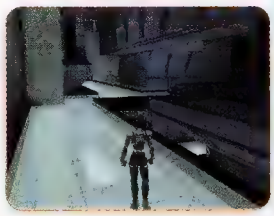




ONI

preview by b. fiechter • dev: bungie • pub: rockstar • avail: february 2001

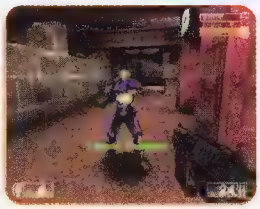
While originally slotted for launch, Oni has fallen into a February release, so the talent at Bungie are getting more than enough time to bring the sci-fi/anime vision to the PlayStation 2. The design intentions are remaining the same: the game is being built around an action center, with puzzles and story filling in to complete the package. Set in the distant future, Oni follows the plight of Konoko, a law enforcement operative trained in the martial arts. In other words, cool. **GR**

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

preview by b. fiechter • dev: epic games • pub: infogrames • avail: october 26

Why port one of the most critically acclaimed multiplayer first-person shooters to the PlayStation 2 without the essential dynamic of Network competition? Apparently Infogrames thinks you will be thrilled enough in playing Unreal Tournament against friends through a split-screen presentation, because there is nearly no reason to run around small arenas by yourself battling computer-controlled opponents. Including the original Unreal would have been greatly appreciated, but it looks like a graphically impressive multiplayer game is what you have to look forward to instead. **GR**



BATMAN BEYOND

preview by d. halverson • dev: kemco • pub: ubi soft • avail: fall

What compelled Ubi Soft, one of the industry's most respected companies, to entrust the coveted Batman Beyond franchise to Kemco I will never understand. As a result, what should be one of the year's best may be reduced to a mundane side-scrolling clunker. At this point, and the game is said to be 90-percent complete, everything that can go wrong, has. Bad animation, floaty jumping, claustrophobic environments that seem to imprison the gameplay, muted color schemes, and repetitive music drown the once mighty caped crusader in a muddled polygonal sea. The question begs to be asked: if you're going to develop a 2D Batman and you've got the caliber of artists we know Ubi Soft has (remember the original Rayman?), why not use the 2D Rayman engine and create another hand drawn masterpiece? I mean, this is Batman! Sadly, the Batman franchise may once again be dealt a losing hand. This franchise seems to have a way of stepping in every pile on the path. First came the crap Acclaim game, then the crap Schumacher movie, and now the virus has spread to the PS and N64 (which at the end of its reign needs this game about as much as it does another color scheme). Barring a miracle, this game is going to fall far short of Ubi's good name. I think it's time America officially closed the book on Batman before we do any more damage. Let Capcom have a crack at it or say goodbye Forever and Beyond. **GR**

BUFFY

preview by c. hoffman • dev: the collective • pub: fox • avail: winter

Believe it or not, Buffy the Vampire Slayer from Fox Interactive is actually shaping up extremely well. Having progressed quite a ways since we last saw the game, the character models are excellent, the animations are well done, and the backgrounds are looking very impressive. Players get to control Buffy as she interacts with locales and characters from the TV show, and uses her fighting skills, a variety of weapons and magic spells to battle the undead in this third-person action-adventure. **GR**

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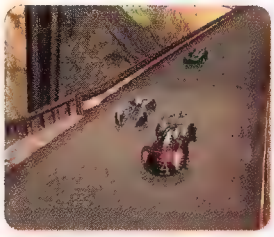
POD 2

preview by c. hoffman • dev: ubi romania • pub: ubi soft • avail: november

Ubi Soft enters the world of futuristic racing with Pod 2, a gritty online racer for Dreamcast. A sequel to a PC hit, Pod 2's main selling point is that the game is built with online gaming in mind. Pod 2 will be one of the first DC racers to let you compete with players across the country, although you can race in split-screen mode or compete against four CPU opponents instead. The game features six well-built courses (not counting mirror versions) with varied environments, including a volcano, a mine, a canyon and industrial ruins. Moody colors compliment nice textures to create a believable post-apocalyptic world, complete with alien creatures obstructing the roadways. And while a couple of the tracks seem a tad too open, the remainder are designed well and filled with multiple routes and shortcuts. Meanwhile, the eight animal-inspired vehicles (with names like Crab, Viper, Cougar and Wasp) share the courses' dark industrial design, though the nice lighting effects and reflections almost look out of place on the dingy machines. Right now the game has a severe lack of modes (nothing but single races), but if Ubi beefs it up for the final release, Pod 2 should be a fun, competent racer. GR



RICKY CARMICHAEL 2

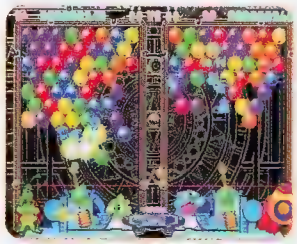
preview by d. halverson • dev: funcom • pub: thq • avail: october

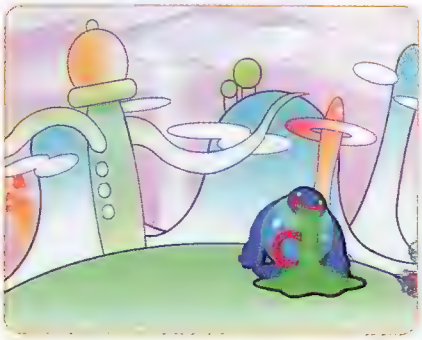
The PlayStation is still a thriving platform and will no doubt continue to be long after its more powerful successor creeps up to take its place in history. Due in no small part to the introduction of the PSOne (especially once the LED screen is made available) and the fact that everyone and his dog has one, there's still room for good games to thrive on this steadfast platform. It is coming to the point, though, where only the best will survive and, I'm happy to report, Championship Motocross 2001 Featuring Ricky Carmichael looks to fit that mold. A vast improvement over last year's edition, Funcom's engine seems stronger than ever, tossing around the PS' limited polys with what seems like a minimum of effort. The new skewed vantage points, a´ la Daytona, are a nice touch and the nimble feel will have you chewing up the dirt with a big ol' smile painted on your face. The game features 28 real riders from the 125cc, 250cc, and 500cc ranks, authentic locales like Unadilla, Hangtown, and Glen Helen and a laundry list of features I'll save for the review. There are, like, 50 tricks that are easy to pull off, should you feel the need, and the animation, sans the absence of the riders putting out a foot around corners, is good stuff. Look for a review next issue. GR

SUPER BUST-A-MOVE

preview by b. fiechter • dev: taito • pub: acclaim • avail: november

I could be mistaken, but I don't think I've ever played a puzzle game with characters who vomit profusely when attacked and let loose a stream of diarrhea. Very charming. It would seem that Taito really wanted to try something new with its durable Bust-A-Move series, but thankfully the changes don't end with the addition of copious body fluids. A delightful visual makeover is the most noticeable improvement, and the gameplay, while still pure Bust-A-Move to its very core, has been given some added complexity by adding such dynamics as directional boxes that can be shot to reposition the bubble platform. Now before you balk at the idea of yet another Bust-A-Move, especially one on PlayStation 2, give it a shot; few series are as recyclable as this. GR





MOTO RACER W. TOUR

preview by d. halverson • dev: dsi • pub: infogrames • avail: november

In all fairness, I've just come off of a two-day binge salivating over Namco's Moto GP for the PS2, and so Moto Racer's visuals initially resembled a VMU game in comparison. The leap in technology won't be taken by everybody, however, and so I must climb down off of my high horse and pretend I haven't just carved up a GP series so real I should have jet lag. This game has a lot going for it, namely authentic locales, arcade, series, and two-player gameplay, and some truly nimble dual analog control. While it's not the prettiest game, I'd have to say that it controls better than just about any two-wheeled road racer on the system. The motocross animations are especially smooth. Our preview offered a minimum of the available tracks and modes though, so a review will have to wait. Moto Racer looks like it will definitely warrant a go if you're a racing fan planning to stick with the PS for awhile. GR

Mr. Takahiro is personally accountable for programming fun code. If you and your friends aren't completely freaked out with fun, then he will be fired. This will dishonor his family, which he can restore only by taking his own life with a sword.
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Violence
Suggestive Themes
Comic Mischief
TITUS
PlayStation
Incredible Crisis. Severe Fun.

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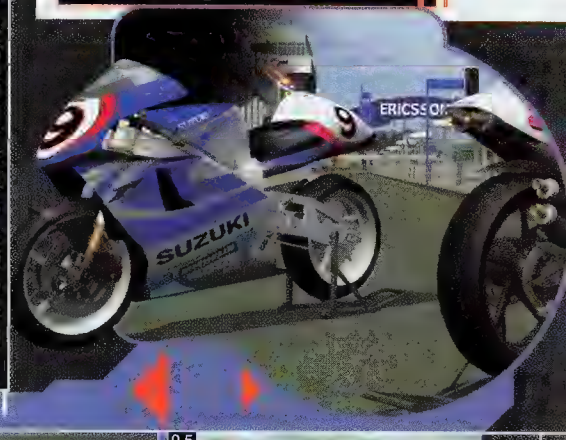
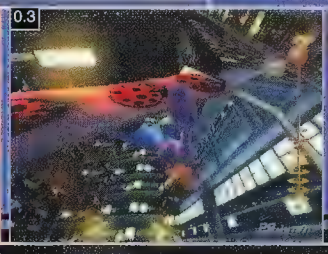
DAVE HALVERSON

Dave Halverson

1. Moto GP
2. Silpheed tlp
3. SSX
4. X Squad
5. Gungriffon Blaze

Lists are highly subjective. I play video games for a living (life is hell), so you can rest assured all of these are excellent. But let's face it, sports gamers are going to go for Madden, fighting fans for DOA or Tekken Tag, and so on. My top five is based on three things: good representation of the technology, replay value and my personal taste. Being a die-hard platforming fan, the fact that my top game is a racer doesn't bode well for the lineup in the first place, but thankfully racing is one of my other passions. If Crash and co. were your bag on PS, you're going to be waiting awhile for the snack tray, so while you wait for Klonoa 2, may I suggest: Moto GP—one of, if not thee best, racing games ever; Silpheed —an infinitely replayabe shooter with a royal pedigree and eye candy so good it could make you fat; SSX Snowboarding—snowboarding at it's absolute finest and the best-looking game of the bunch; X Squad—a beautiful mission ops game with a stellar cast and eye-popping visuals; and Gungriffon Blaze, a mech assault sim with some of the most intuitive control you will ever feel.



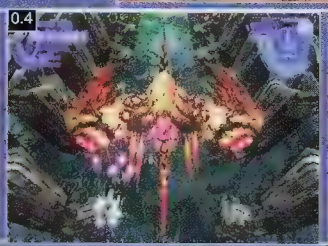


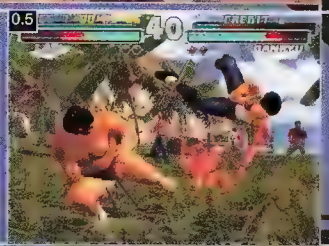
BRADY FIECHTER

Brady Fiechter

1. SSX
2. Ridge Racer V
3. X Squad
4. Silpheed tlp
5. Tekken Tag

If you must have one game at launch, make it SSX Snowboarding. I've never even liked a snowboarding game before, yet here comes one from EA that dwarfs every launch title in the PS2 arsenal and is in the running for my "year's best" list. It's destined to become a classic. Ride Racer V is just as good in its own right, a racing game without equal. Tekken Tag Tournament is the best version of Tekken yet, a visual powerhouse with character models that are so detailed you can see muscle striations. X Squad is a throwback to simplistic action gameplay, made fresh and new with incredible level architecture, and Silpheed, a faithful update to a Sega CD classic, was developed by the masters at Treasure. So let's review: five awesome games at launch—any one could be one of your favorites for the year—and at least another five that could have very easily made the list. I envy those playing all these great launch games for the first time.



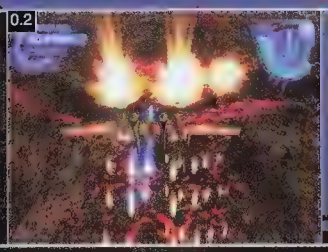


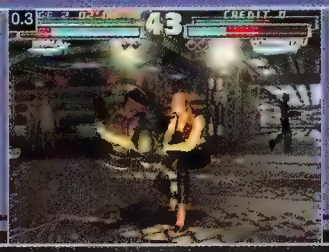
EDITORS' PS2 LAUNCH TOP 5

Mike Hobbs

1. Ridge Racer V
2. Silpheed tlp
3. Tekken Tag
4. Moto GP
5. Gungriffon Blaze

Having just received word that Sony will only ship 500,000 PS2s on launch day, October 26, I shall defer my purchase to a later date. Being in the privileged position that I am, I've played nearly all the launch games, so I'll let a member of the game-buying public have my machine. Now, when you happen to get a hold of the PS2 that I so graciously sacrificed, these are the games I think you should get: Ridge Racer V, Silpheed, Tekken Tag Tournament, Moto GP, and Gungriffon Blaze. Each one of these games is beautiful, incredibly well designed, and will show you graphics the likes of which you've never seen on a home console. Ridge Racer V is simply the most exciting racing game I've ever played, Silpheed is a classic overhead shooter designed by Treasure, Tekken is a most amazing looking fighter, Moto GP is utterly stupendous, and Gungriffon Blaze is a nearly perfect mech title. Were it not for the limited number of systems, this could be considered the best launch of all time.

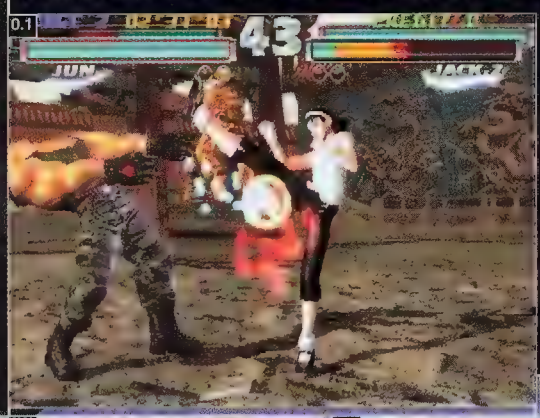


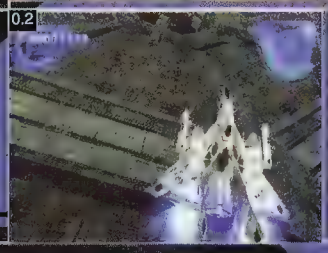


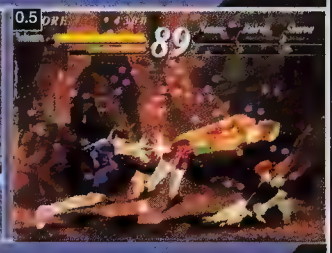
Chris Hoffman

1. Tekken Tag
2. Silpheed tlp
3. Ridge Racer V
4. SSX
5. Street Fighter EX3

Say what you want about Tekken Tag Tournament - that the animation is straight from Tekken 3, that the gameplay hasn't evolved - but that doesn't change the fact that Tekken is still the best 3D fighting series out there (sorry Soul Calibur fans). The incredible character models are a spectacular showcase of the PS2's visual power and the "jaggies" that people complained about have even been removed. Silpheed, meanwhile, should satisfy any shooter fan's need to blow away legions of enemy fighters. Backed by Treasure's awesome bosses and wild weapons, Silpheed perfectly blends old-school shooting fun with cutting-edge technology. As for SSX Snowboarding and Ridge Racer V, well, I'm not even a huge fan of racing games or extreme sports, but even I have to appreciate the majesty of these two spectacular games. Rounding out the list is Street Fighter EX 3, which simply takes the classic fighting series and finally renders it in 3D justice.







MIKE HOBBS

CHRIS HOFFMAN

Gamers' Republic Reviews

Games Reviewed This Issue

Domestic Reviews

4X4 Evolution DC	B+
Cool Boarders 2001 PS	C
Championship Surfer DC	C
Crash Bash PS	B
Dave Mirra BMX PS	B
Danger Girl PS	C+
Frogger 2 DC	B
Gradius III & IV PS2	A-
Medal of Honor: UG PS	B+
Mega Man Legends 2 PS	B-
Mega Man 64 PS	C
Moto GP PS2	A
Orphen PS2	B-
Polaris Snocross PS	D-
Silent Scope PS2	B+
Spawn: Demon's Hand DC	A-
Spyro: Year of Dragon PS	A-
SF III: 3rd Strike DC	B
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 PS	A+
Wild Wild Racing PS2	B-
Zelda: Majora's N64	A-

Import Reviews

American Arcade	C-
G-Saviour	F

Sports Reviews

Int'l Track & Field PS2	B
Madden NFL 2001 PS2	A
NBA Live 2001 PS	B
NBA Shootout 2001 PS	B-
NFL2K1 DC	A
NHL 2001 PS2	A-

Handheld Reviews

Alice in Wonderland GBC	C+
Dragon's Lair GBC	C-
LM 2: Pinball Frenzy GBC	B
Metal Walker GBC	C+
Perfect Dark GBC	B
San Fran Rush 2049 GBC	C-

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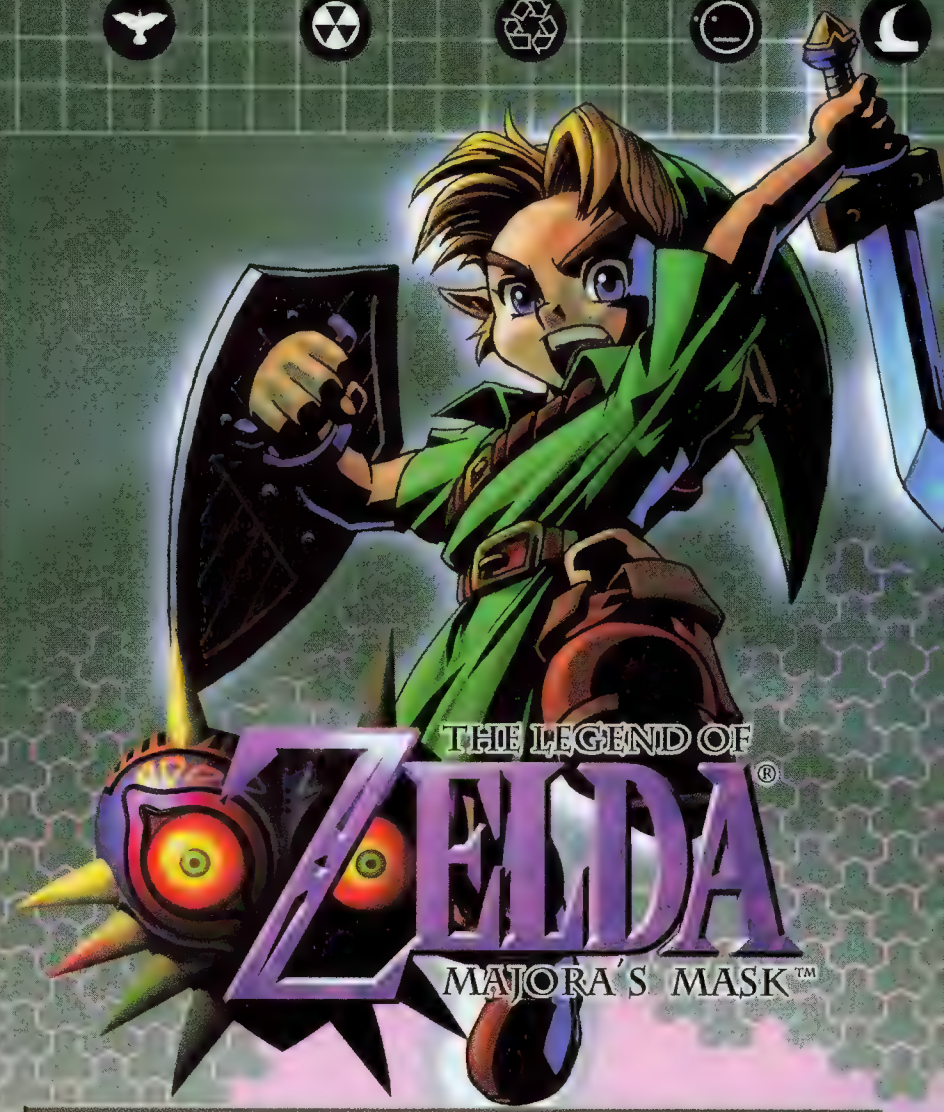
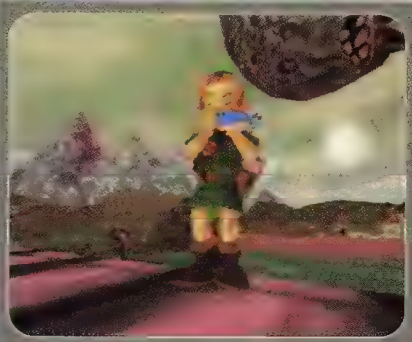


Game of the Month



Legend of Zelda Majora's Mask

Developer: Publisher: Nintendo

The second you hear that classic music, you know the Zelda magic is in the air. Pull ... and join Link in another of his quests, full of ...

WILD WILD RACING

BY BRADY FIECHTER

A solid off-road racer uses a strong dose of realism and expansive track design for its appeal

Ridge Racer V is the pinnacle of arcade racing, and it's the obvious choice for racing fans looking to have their wow meter driven to overload well past the expiration date of PlayStation 2 launch freshness. Awesome game. But how about a decent package of off-road competition with authentic physics to compliment your racing collection? "But I hated TNN Hardcore Heat on Dreamcast," you say. "But that's OK," I say, because this game is fairly forgiving, tuning its physics for a stiffer, sharper feel. The buggies respond to the road in an accurate manner, exhibiting proper balance and handling as the terrain and conditions change.

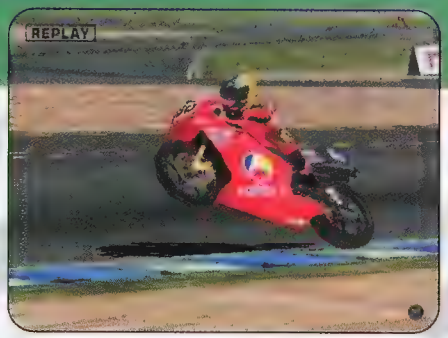
One of Wild Wild Racing's strong points is the way the visual presence of the vehicle translates to the controller, and while the game feels convincingly real, there is just enough arcade tuning to contain the racing within the boundaries of practical, enjoyable gameplay. As you work your way through the various difficulty levels, buggies can be upgraded and won by tackling challenges such as collecting letters on the tournament courses or grabbing the gold trophy on stunt tracks. Initially there doesn't seem to be a huge difference in the mannerisms and performance feel of the different buggies, but you'll quickly find that the only way to capture first place as the courses become more difficult is to win a new ride.

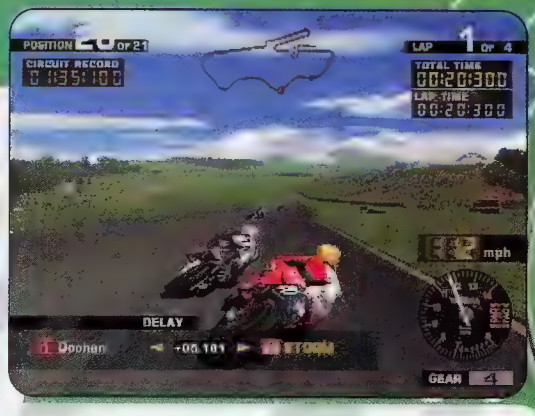
The detail on the buggies is terrific, and while certainly not eye-poppers, the globe-spanning courses are well designed, expansive and nicely structured. There's never any single racing line to follow, and the long stretches of multiple paths force you to deal with learning the course and its shortcuts more than your opponent. A few more than the six buggies that are in the field at once might have pumped up the intensity a bit, especially in pro circuit, where the races can get pretty spread out during the ten-minute runs, and the available five courses leave you unsatisfied. But for a launch title offering an off-road racing experience you're not going to find again any time soon on the system, Wild Wild Racing is a marginal success. GR

- GOOD PHYSICS ON THE BUGGIES
- GOOD TRACK DESIGN: NICE AND OPEN
- NEEDS MORE INTERACTION WITH THE COMPETITION
- MORE LEVELS, PLEASE

REPUBLIC SAYS... DECENT TRACK DESIGN, A SOLID ENGINE, GREAT-LOOKING BUGGIES AND A SATISFYING PHYSICS MODEL BUILD THE OFF-ROAD EXPERIENCE.

B-





MOTO GP

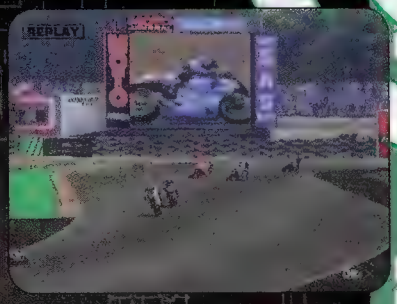
BY DAVE HALVERSON

Namco have outdone themselves once again, dishing out a PS2 game at launch that leaves most of the pack eating their dust

This truly is God's gift to racing. I'd say that Moto GP does for road racing what Ridge Racer V has for auto racing, but that would be an understatement. Moto GP goes beyond even that lofty perch, with a game so real you'll feel like you should have jet lag from travelling the world's finest race tracks. Forget everything you know about road racing on a home console and get ready for the real thing.

It's almost impossible to describe how Moto GP feels in your hands. The rhythm of the game seems to permeate your psyche, connecting you, the controller, and the bike in a symphony of speed and skill. If classical music had a visual aid, it would be this game. What's beautiful about this control is that it's not instantly discernable, but rather embedded in the gameplay—where you may discover it on the last lap at Donington with two turns to go and ten meters between you and first place. Feather the analog midway through its arc coming out of a corner and feel the tire break loose ever so slightly as the RPMs soar. The sense of realism is uncanny: bump elbows and watch as both riders react or, doing 180 mph down the back straight at Suzuka, marvel that you can literally feel and hear the intense wind. All the while, layers of sound seem to emit from all directions, from the crowded grandstands to the long, lonely straightaways.

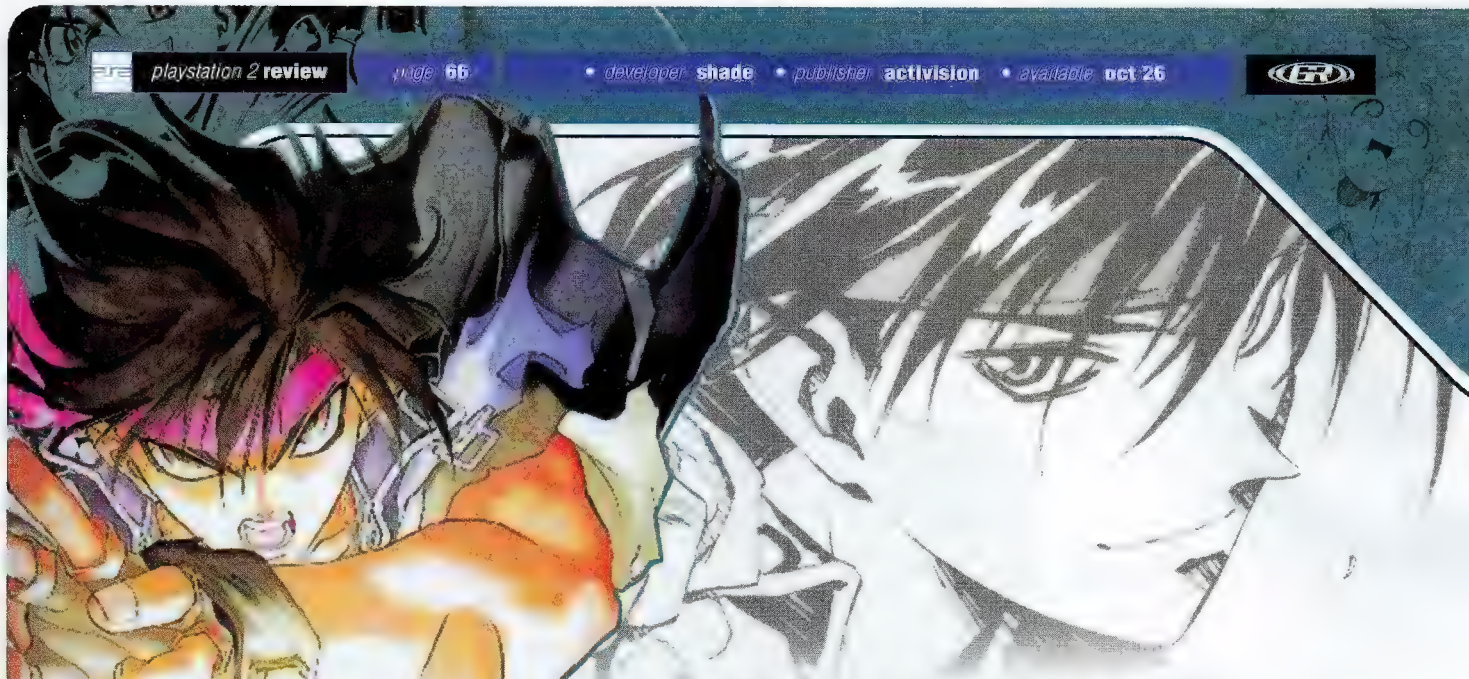
Moto GP far outshines its arcade counterpart, and real seasons, real teams, and real contracts are only the beginning. MGP now boasts Challenge mode, a series of challenges with rewards ranging from authentic track photography to team and development photos; Time Trial, where you can test your skills against a ghost opponent on any course; Vs. play at 60 frames with no clipping; and, of course, Arcade and Season play with easy, normal, and hard settings. You can also turn the simulation elements on and off, of which I suggest the latter, until you've mastered the game on hard.



If there's a complaint to be made, it's that MGP only has five tracks. But seeing as how those five are perfect representations of The Spanish Gran Prix at Jerez, The British GP at Donington, The Motegi and Suzuka GPs of Japan, and the French GP at Paul Ricard, I hardly see a reason to complain. Namco has elevated road racing on a home console to staggering new heights and, in addition to MGP, they're responsible for the best PS2 auto racing and fighting game at launch. And then next up is Klonoa, which will probably do for platformers what MGP has for racing. As more and more companies begin to sell out and bloat at the expense of quality, Namco becomes more of a treasure every year they stay the course. **GR**

- THE MOST REALISTIC RACING EXPERIENCE ON TWO WHEELS
- PHYSICS FROM THE GODS
- UNCANNY SENSE OF SPEED AND CONTROL
- AND, OF COURSE, AN AMAZING SOUNDTRACK

REPUBLICSAYS... NAMCO JUST COMPLETELY RULES. MY CHOICE AS THE MOST DESIRABLE PS2 LAUNCH TITLE, MOTO GP IS INFINITELY REPLAYABLE AND PACKED WITH PS2-ONLY EXTRAS. OUTSTANDING!



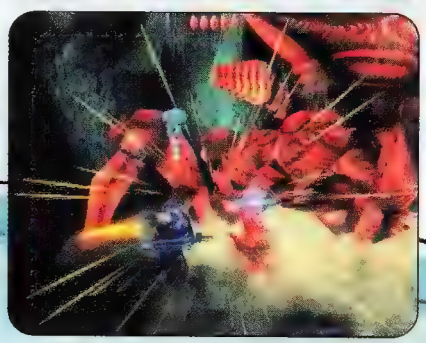
ORPHEN: SCION OF SORCERY

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Activision does for the PS2 what it did for the Dreamcast, bringing over the first action-RPG for the console

A beautiful and bewitching girl seeks her long lost love's final resting place. A warrior searches for his missing daughter. A grandmother must unearth a cure for her rapidly aging granddaughter. A young boy is drawn by a haunting melody as he hunts for his mother. These are just some of the stories you'll indulge in as you assume the role of the reluctant Orphen, a powerful sorcerer with a thirst for cold hard cash. Travelling with Orphen are his pupil Magnus, a wormy young boy and junior sorcerer, and Cleo, a nagging, card-carrying bitch on wheels (or at least that's how she's portrayed). You're a guest of Gia's deserted island of Chaos and a legendary power called the crystal egg. The story unfurls during a routine bounty job when the vessel Orphen and company are sailing on gets redirected by Orphen's greedy rival (a midget of a wizard named Guss), who's heard of the egg and is after its riches and power. After falling under the attack of a mighty sea beast, the ship's occupants all end up stranded on Chaos Island, where Orphen will team with each one and systematically help them fulfill their destinies. After each, Orphen is mysteriously returned to the ship just prior to the attack and all memories are wiped away as the beast attacks again... *Ground Hog Day*!

Arriving at the island, the players remain the same each time, but they take on different roles. Once Orphen assists all three, only then will his ultimate destiny be fulfilled. Interest-



ing? Well, yes. Even though you're playing on the same island, it's big, and few areas repeat. Through time travel, the scenes change greatly, as do the weather and enemies. The proverbial fly in the ointment lies in the voice acting, which sadly doesn't live up to the anime's standards. After sitting in on a recording session, we had high hopes, but it just doesn't quite gel right.

Still, Orphen is an engaging launch title that shows off the PS2's strengths and weaknesses equally, so it warrants investigation. It's also based on a quality anime OVA and TV series, so anime fans will definitely want to give it a go. Pity a subtitled option isn't available (as the original voice acting is quite inspired), but then again we're used to cheesy voice acting!

Even amidst the PS2's polygon processing prowess, the graphics are a surprisingly mixed bag. You get great character models, intense effects, huge spectacular boss battles, innovative (and at times epic) vistas to explore, and great cinematic technique, but on the other hand there's questionable draw distance, many N64-quality textures, and anti-aliasing problems. As for the control, the jumping physics redefine "clunky," and the number of

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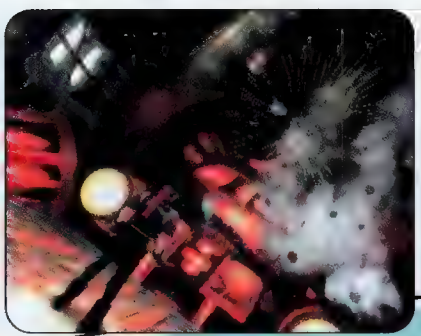
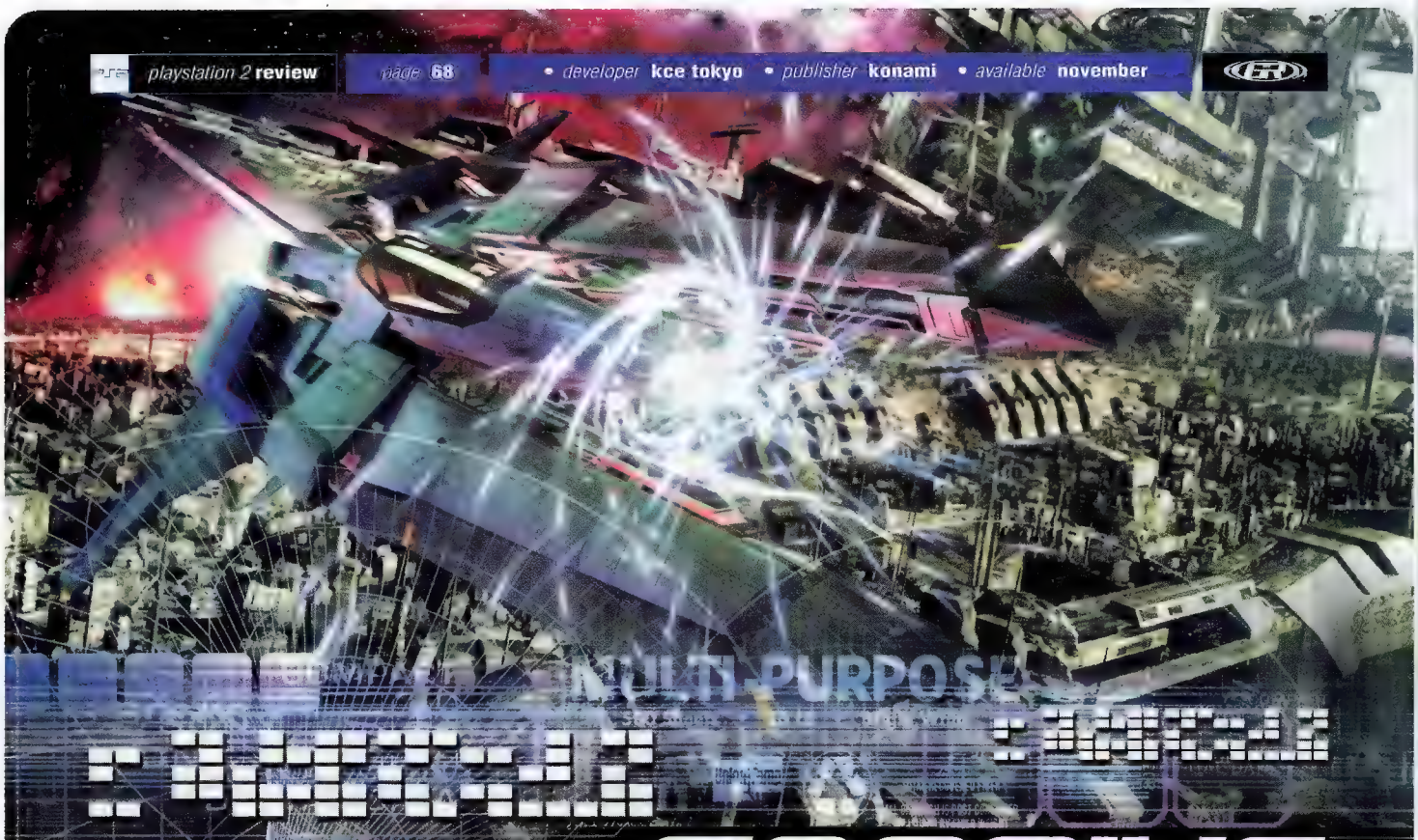


- SPECTACULAR BOSS BATTLES AND SPECIAL EFFECTS
- AMAZING SOUNDTRACK

- THE VOICE ACTING IS QUESTIONABLE
- MANY CAMERA FLAWS AND LIMITED ANIMATION ROUTINES

REPUBLIC SAYS... ORPHEN IS A TRULY MIXED BAG. IT'S NOT THE LAUNCH ACTION-RPG THAT BLUE STINGER WAS FOR DC, BUT ANIME FANS AND ADVENTURE SEEKERS WILL LIKELY FIND IT WORTHY.

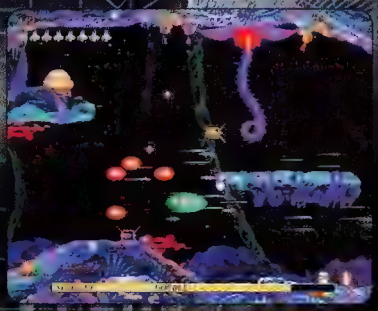
B-

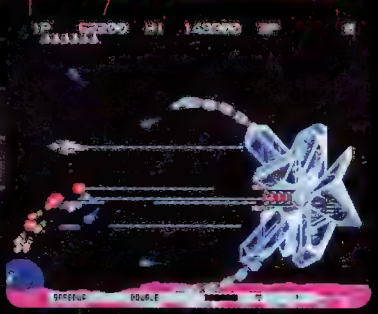


GRADIUS III & IV

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

Destroy them all! Fire up the Vic Viper and take on the Bacterian Empire once again in this classic shooter reborn





Hardcore shooter fans, salvation has arrived! Shooters have been making a comeback as of late, and Konami is joining the madness with Gradius III & IV, two of the greatest thumb-busting blasters of all time packed into one CD.

If you aren't familiar with the Gradius series, then shame on you. Gradius is 2D shooting bliss: it's all about strategic, pattern-based, sprite-mad intensity, loaded with rockin' music and some of the sweetest weapons ever devised. Gradius III is pure classic action (we saw it last on the SNES back in 1991), so it might look a little dated, but part IV is based on a coin-op from last year and is filled with awesome graphic effects like morphing enemies, fluid waves of lava, reflective ice crystals and incredible-looking bubbles that melt away when you blast them. Both games are filled with a simply insane number of sprites and bullets, not to mention some of the most wicked cool bosses ever seen. It's only through skill, practice and a lot of luck that you'll overcome the 20 or so stages offered between the two games. Even on easier settings, Gradius is one challenging game.

On the other hand, Gradius III & IV doesn't exactly showcase the PS2's power. It's truly a game for old-school fans, not a game you'll whip out to impress your friends (other than perhaps the fantastic intro FMV). Plus, the slowdown from the original arcade game is still present. Does that diminish Gradius' gameplay any? Heck no. If anything, Konami deserves a big hurrah for bringing out a game where gameplay, not fancy 3D effects, is still king. A must-have for classic shooter fans. GR

- CLASSIC, STRATEGIC SHOOTING ACTION
- AWESOME BOSSES
- ONE OF THE MOST ROCKIN' SOUNDTRACKS EVER
- NOT EXACTLY A PLAYSTATION 2 SHOWCASE

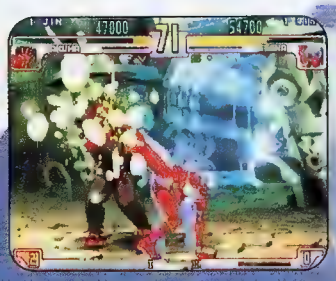
REPUBLIC SAYS... IF YOUR TRIGGER FINGER HAS BEEN ITCHING FOR SOMETHING TO SHOOT, GRAB GRADIUS III & IV AND GET READY FOR OLD-SCHOOL SHOOTING MAYHEM.

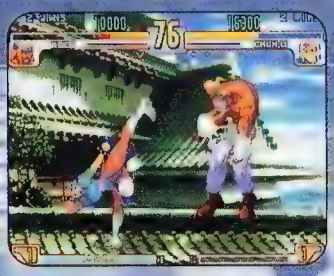
A-

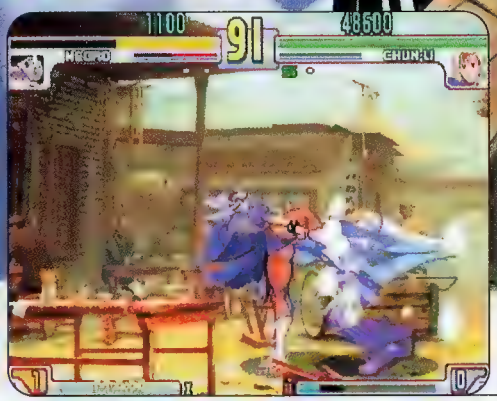
version 6.98.01 – inmage rendering complete

STREET FIGHTER 3 3RD STRIKE

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN







Third time's a charm? Five new fighters join the fray in the latest installment of the legendary fighting saga

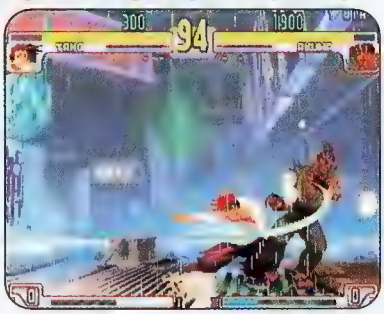
Capcom delivered arcade-perfect fighting action to Dreamcast owners merely months ago with Street Fighter III: Double Impact, so why, fans may ask, are they bringing us another new iteration with Street Fighter III: Third Strike? Well, the big enhancement this time is the addition of five new characters to the roster, but they've made many other changes as well—some for the better and some not.

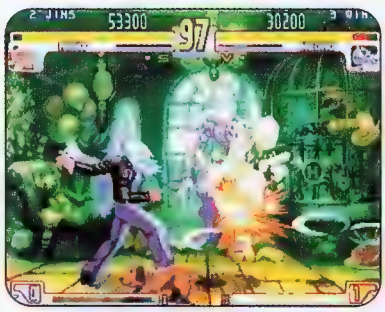
This time around, Makoto (a Judo expert), Q (a robot), Remy (a lot like Guile), Twelve (an alien-like character who would do better in Darkstalkers) and Chun-Li (she plays nothing like her old self) have joined the previous roster of Alex, Ryu, Necro and the rest, finally bringing the line-up to a respectable 20 fighters. Another nice addition is the ability to completely customize the fighting engine. You can modify the timing of the parrying defense, or you can turn it off altogether. Don't like throws? Turn those off too. You can alter your blocking range, and you can even disable blocking or jumping if you wish, plus a lot more. Essentially, you can play the game by whatever rules you want.

The fighting action, though, isn't quite as rock-solid as Double Impact. It's still as strategic and precise as ever, resulting in some of the purest scientific fighting that you'll find anywhere, but some changes in move priorities leave some tarnish on the golden gameplay.

More obvious is the decreased quality of the graphics. Though the all-new backgrounds are very nicely done and could be considered works of art on their own merits, they look more like impressionist works and lack the sharpness and high resolution we were treated to in Double Impact. The characters suffer as well. Like some other recent 2D fighters from Capcom, the characters just look a bit pixilated and rough at the edges. The animation is still awesome at least: you can actually see Gill's mouth movements when he talks.

Third Strike provides some great fighting action, but there's just no getting around the fact that it looks and plays a step down from Double Impact. **GR**

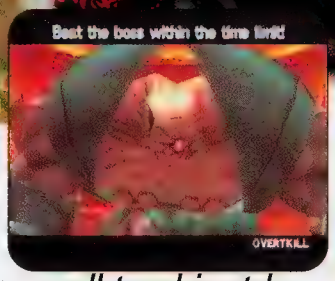


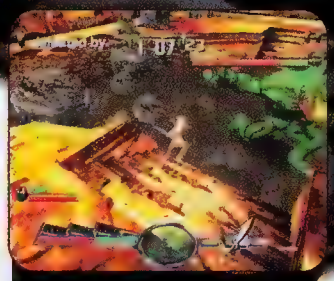


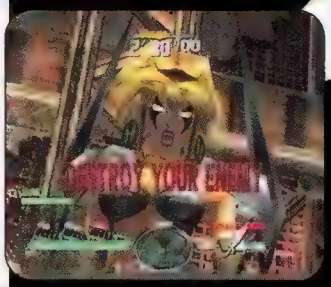
- FIVE NEW FIGHTERS, INCLUDING CHUN-LI
- PRECISE, STRATEGIC FIGHTING ACTION
- TOTALLY CUSTOMIZE THE GAME RULES
- GRAPHICS AREN'T NEARLY AS CLEAN

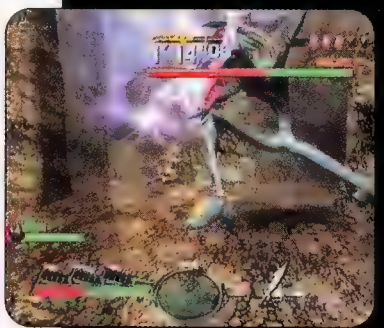
REPUBLIC SAYS... A SOLID FIGHTING EFFORT, BUT YOU'D DO BETTER TO PICK UP THE MORE POLISHED SF3: DOUBLE IMPACT UNLESS YOU GOTTA HAVE THE NEW FIGHTERS.

B









SPAWN

BY DAVE HALVERSON

If you're on a one-way ticket to hell...you may as well travel in style.

McFarlane's masterpiece finally spawns a worthy game

Pure addiction is the best way to describe Capcom's latest action-fighting endeavor, Spawn: In the Demon's Hand. They may as well inject this game with a needle because once it gets under your skin, there's no turning back.

After an impressive rendered intro (accompanied by trite but somehow fitting '80s rock), you're met with a variety of options. In Tournament mode, one player can have at Team Battle or Battle Royal, or, in the Arcade mode, up to four can slay either of those or take the E ticket to hell in Boss Attack, which culminates in a face-to-face with that festering, puss-filled devil himself, Malbolgia. My recommendation, as soon as you peel off the wrapper, is to go solo (and do play alone; this game demands your full screen) in the Boss Attack mode using Tiffany, along with the CPU-controlled Spawn by her side. This lethal combination should allow you to see every beast and bad ass from the Spawn universe in the glorious detail that Capcom has become renowned for. Tiffany's double jump allows you an aerial edge: you can land in the vicinity of the boss and, with a flick of the R-trigger, run your blade from groin to gourd; and her sword thrust can really reach out and cut someone. All the while Spawn shoots from afar, running the perfect interference. Once you're all the way through the first time, you're awarded a new combatant and then, well, kiss the days goodbye. If you like Power Stone, you'll love Spawn, and if you're a Spawn fan to boot, you'll hope they name a holiday after this one. The attention to detail exhibited in both the models and environments are second to none, and at 60 fps, the entire game is a furious mass of energy waiting to spill into your humble abode. Capcom has captured the cast in polygons to perfection and has the Dreamcast firing on all cylinders; Sega's hardware in Capcom's hands has proven an unbeatable combination.

The breadth of this game is almost unfathomable with 24 characters to unlock, art galleries to fill, and a wealth of play choices for one to four players. This is the game Spawn fans have been dying to get their hands on. **GR**

- LOOKS THAT KILL. SPAWN JUST SEEPS DC GOODNESS
- GAMEPLAY IS FAST, FLUID AND ADDICTING
- CAPCOM CAPTURED THE CHARACTERS - OUTSTANDING MODELS
- 24 HIDDEN CHARACTERS AND ALL TYPES OF PLAY CHOICES

REPUBLIC SAYS... SPAWN STANDS AS THE BEST ACTION FIGHTER I'VE YET PLAYED. A MARRIAGE OF FLUID MOVES, AWESOME CHARACTERS, RAUNCHY SETTINGS, AND WICKED GAMEPLAY THAT'S UNMATCHED.

A-

SPAWN © TODD MCFARLANE

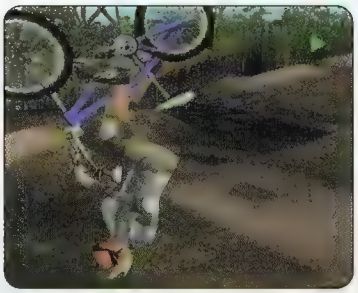
DAVE MIRRA BMX

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX presents a complete package to the BMX masses. Come grind with the who's who of professional BMX

Since my preview, Dave Mirra BMX hasn't changed a whole lot, and so, while there's still a ton to like about Acclaim's first foray into the world of BMX, my issues with the control still haunt Mirra's otherwise impressive presentation.

The environments are put together extremely well (even if they do blink and clip on the PS), and the animation is praiseworthy, as are the bikes and riders. ProQuest is cool, a series of challenges you must complete to move on to the next, rewarded by new bikes, gear, and areas. In fact, the game has an unequaled variety of modes and, therefore, staying power to burn. The entire game has an open feeling about it. There's tons of grindable area, awesome transitions to master, and secret areas accessible by all manner of trickery. Mirra has some of the best level design I've seen in a skateboarding/BMX venue. It also boasts a ton of secrets and unequalled diversity from place to place.



Now for the interactive portion of my review. If you own Mirra BMX for the PS, have you grinded those warehouse doors yet? Hit all of those lounge chairs? How about the one on top of the ramp? Bah! It's clear how to go about pulling off these tasks, I just think they're a bit frustrating to hit within the game's somewhat loose-feeling framework. It's pretty tough to hit a specific mark, especially without being able to see it from very far away. The turning radius is just too wide for some of these elements. As a result, only through diligent memorization do specific objectives become workable. I also found it a pain to jump out of vertical onto a flat plane. The game forces you in to a transition, making certain routes difficult. Many of these issues can be compensated for by practice, and I suppose that's a lot of what makes these types of games compelling.

Mirra's pretty user friendly, but to master its many nuances is going to take some doing. I also question the music they chose, to the extent that it whips me into a rage. When did skateboarding, motocross, BMX, and surfing become synonymous with raspy alternative rock? And if you must include these game-killing distractions, why not throw in some tunes we can flow to as well. I'd rather fly the friendly skies to some BT or just some good old game tunes. Lastly, as I mentioned before, there's quite a bit of the old PlayStation nervous polygon syndrome in here as well. This I'm sure will be corrected in the Dreamcast version, which I'm really hoping addresses the camera issues as well.

Overall, I really like Dave Mirra BMX a lot, and I'll like it even more on Dreamcast. Given that this ambitious game's a first effort, I commend Acclaim and Z-Axis. It offers excellent progression and represents the genre in style. At the same time, there's plenty of room for improvement the next time around, but that's what sequels are all about. GR

- EXCELLENT LEVEL DESIGN - LOTS OF AREA TO ASSAULT
- VERY GOOD RIDER AND BIKE MODELS
- THEIRS A BIT OF A LEARNING CURVE
- 90% OF THE MUSIC JUST HURTS

REPUBLIC SAYS... I LIKE MIRRA A LOT BUT THINK THAT Z-AXIS AND ACCLAIM LEFT SOME ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT FOR THE DC VERSION AND THE SEQUELS.

B

4X4 EVOLUTION

BY DAVE HALVERSON

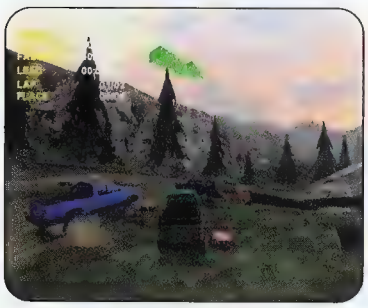
Vast simulation elements come face to face with off-road racing and online gaming. Time to get dirty

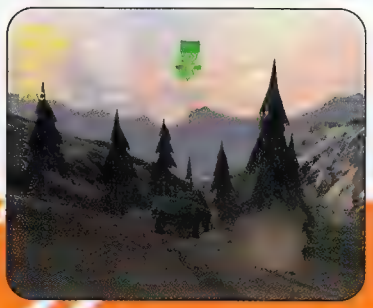
I could simply state that 4X4 Evolution is to off-road racing on the Dreamcast what Gran Turismo is to road racing on the PlayStation. Everyone would buy it and, hey, I can go home.

If it were only that simple. There's actually more under the hood of Evo than any of its competition, including online play versus other Dreamcast users or, get this, Mac or PC users! That's right, jump on the network and you can play in their game. Better yet, there's a Career mode in here so big that you'll practically have to quit your career to finish it, and a slew of other modes that'll keep you behind the wheel until you're too old to drive.

You start with $30,000 in cash, which will buy a nice boring stock truck. Pick up a Dakota or whatever and hit the trail (pity the Lexus is just out of reach as the game commences). Once you get a couple of races under your belt and enough cash to hit the shop, hold onto your headers because this isn't your usual "shop." You will not see "upgrade engine $3,000.00." Rather, get ready for a crash course in actually beefing up a stock motor. Like that custom clutch, huh? Well, to bad you can't buy it until you upgrade your flywheel. And so it goes, and goes, and goes. By the time your truck is truly stylin', you'll be damn proud to own it. Lucky for us, the racing is good enough to keep you out there earning. It's all here: real-time physics, all types of weather and conditions, free-roaming courses you can literally cut across (just don't miss that checkpoint), and AI that will astound even the most jaded gearhead. There are 25 challenges in the Career mode as well, and you'll be tradin' paint in each and every one.

To say that this game has it all is an understatement. There is limited line of sight masked by gradual draw in, but given the scope of the environments, it really has no effect on the overall experience. I've been playing this game for days and there's just no end in sight. If realistic racing is your thing, it simply doesn't get much better. **GR**

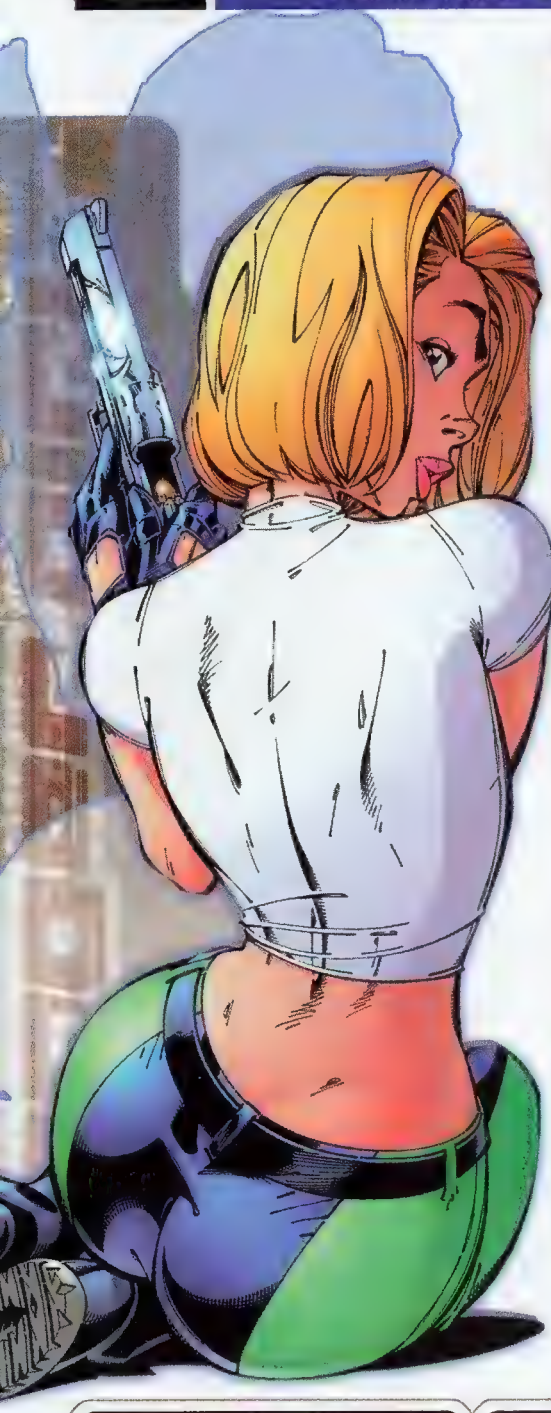


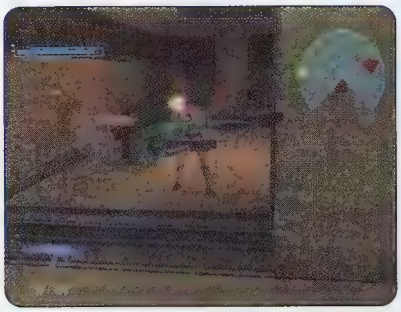


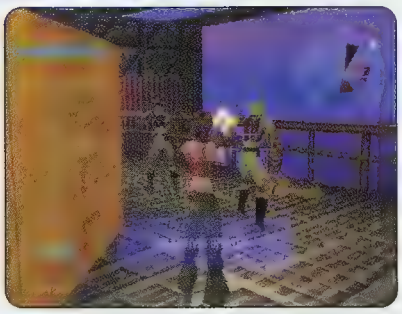
- MONSTER ENVIRONMENTS YOU CAN CUT ACROSS AT WILL
- ONLINE COMPATIBLE WITH PC, MAC AND DC!
- GREAT PHYSICS AND CONTROL
- THIS SUCKER IS DEEP AND THE SIM ELEMENTS ARE CRAZY

REPUBLIC SAYS... 4X4 EVOLUTION PRETTY MUCH DOES IT ALL. ONLINE OR OFF THERE'S ENOUGH ROAD HERE TO KEEP YOU OCCUPIED FOR WEEKS AND WEEKS.

B+







Ready to get your hands around the shapeliest heroines this side of a Tomb Raider? THQ's got your medicine

Comic book fans have no doubt been waiting anxiously to get behind the controls of the Danger Girls, for obvious reasons: they're the hottest thing in ink on the planet. And although the end result is a B+ game in a C+'s body, it's more than worth investigating. Be warned, however, Danger Girl shares a trait with N-Space's similarly cool but hard Duke Nukem: Zero Hour: saves are few and far between. Only after completing an entire level will the save screen appear, and these levels are long and full of surprises. You can easily be 30 minutes into a 35-min.-long level and have the lights turned out, only to be dropped in at the beginning again. Thankfully, the levels are intriguing enough to warrant at least a few passes. Interactive puzzles and plot twists abound as Deuce and the other girls chime in to give you the lay of the land.

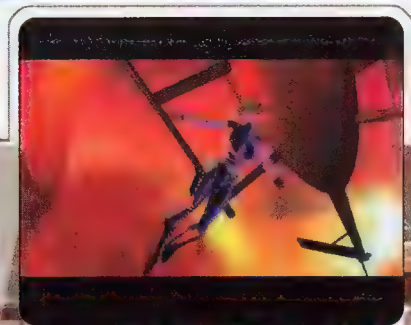
The first op—Rumble in the Jungle starring Abbey Chase—is a good precursor to JC, Sidney, and Valerie's missions, familiarizing the player with the controls and menu. The control is a complete package. Sniping, strafing, rolling, jumping, sneaking, shooting, toggling items, and controlling the camera are compacted into an easy-to-master package. Sounds like a winner, eh? Well, hold the phones, there is one other glitch in the matrix—the frame rate. Thirty fps is a distant dream playing Danger Girl, but the trade off—nice models and big, non-clipping and -fogged environments—is almost worth it. And if that doesn't float your boat, wait till you get a load of the game's, shall we say, generous CG cinemas, where the developers make ample use of the girl's most impressive attributes. The music, too, is very, very good.

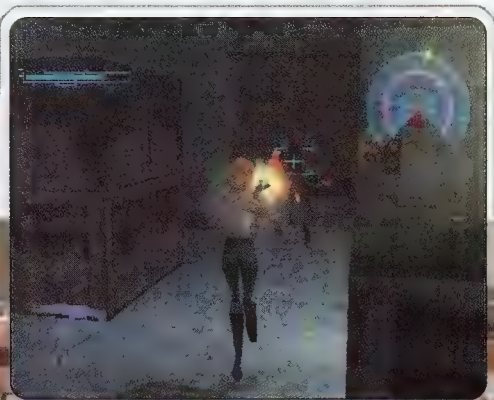
As a fan of the comic, I'm on the fence. A quick port onto the willing Dreamcast or N64 and Danger Girl's problems would all fade away, so I'm a bit unhappy that neither is in the works. On the other hand, I'm glad that the franchise is getting the recognition it so deserves. Perhaps we'll all meet again sometime in the future on better hardware.

GR

DANGER GIRL

BY DAVE HALVERSON

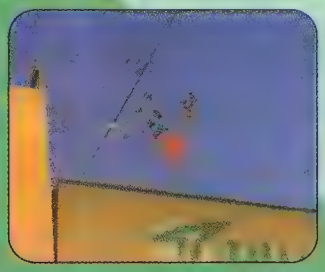




- STRONG LEVEL DESIGN - GREAT MUSIC
- CG SEQUENCES TIE THE ACTION TOGETHER NICELY
- NOT ENOUGH SAVE POINTS BY A LONG SHOT
- FRAME RATE TAKES A MAJOR HIT

REPUBLIC SAYS... WHILE IT'S NOT THE GAME I'D HOPED FOR, IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR FANS TO GET A FEW THRILLS OUT OF. A DREAMCAST PORT WOULD MAKE IT ALL BETTER, THOUGH.

C+



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

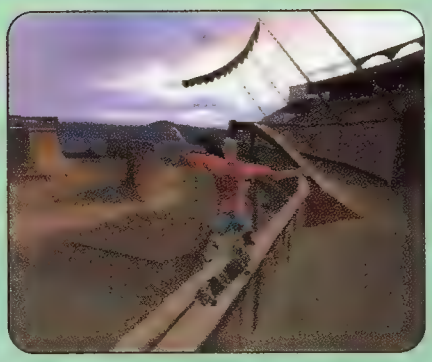
BY TOM STRATTON

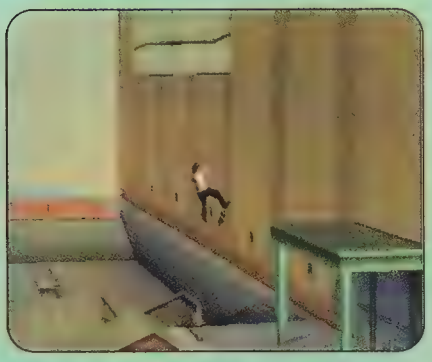
Even better than the original, this incredible skate-boarding game will continue to amaze even the most hardcore skaters

Pro Skater 2 is a game that delivers endless progression for a player, something that I don't think has been correctly executed in any game since Street Fighter II. And even though as a gamer you might find a deep attraction to the responsive controls and tricked-out play mechanics, you need to be a skater to really understand how far Neversoft has gone to create a bona fide experience. A quick example for skate fans: Holding the trigger button while olliing will result in a nollie. Slide into switch stance and preform the same move and it becomes a fakie ollie! This is but one of many amazing specialized nuances.

To start, the front-end menus are easy to navigate through, considering the amount of customization you are allowed to survey. And I'm not just speaking of the obligatory ability to switch your character's outfits. You can, but there is so much more. Probably the most intensive option is the ability to completely reconfigure your skater's moves. Granted, you really don't need to when playing the game the first time out, because the developers have made a good balance of creating individual styles for each character. So learning how to chain combos with the preset commands will help you logically replace new moves once you've become comfortable with manipulating your skater in a level.

Levels! Yabble dabble. Again, Neversoft has engineered a perfect collection of environments. From the infinite antics of Mullet Falls to the high-wire act in Philadelphia, Pro Skater 2 pushes the player to achieve a status once thought impossible. Whether designers made this intentional or not, initially players will commit to wiring a solid line of tricks in a particular level. For me it was level two, the school. But slowly I became more interested in other levels and





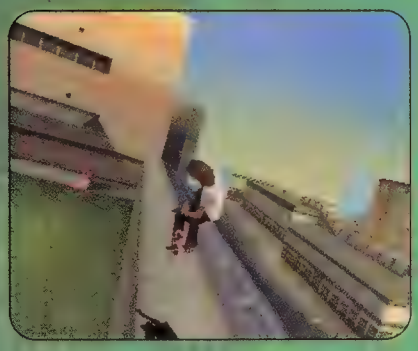
somewhat graduated from my pioneering lyceum to establish stronger lines and more outstanding combos in levels like Venice.

Earlier I made a reference to Street Fighter II. Many of you know the game and have probably invested some good time with it. Those who really studied it were able to link combos stretching into the double digits, but for some reason the simple three or four hit combos felt best. The same is true for Pro Skater 2. Even though you can tether a combo well into the 30s or 40s, it is the two- to five-step combo that really looks clean and feels great. Not to mention that combos can now be rated as "perfect" or "sloppy," so finding your best landing position is clearer when completing a small, tight string of tricks.

No way will I be able to convey everything that makes this game so engaging, the many innovations and additions that make it superior. Just scratching the surface are the two-player modes. Now players can choose from about five play modes. Two additions from last year are Free Skate and Tag, though the most fun has to go to Graffiti mode for the second year in a row. The competitive nature these two-player games elicit is just as intense as a one-player game.

Now throw in a crazy cool level editor and it's a guarantee that whoever is playing Tony Hawk 2 will probably ignore any responsibilities or persons not related to the game for a good long while. Neversoft even went so far as to include a few examples of custom levels to help stimulate creative energy. And since I brought up stimulation, now is as good a time as any to mention music. With a collection of punk, rock and hip-hop, each song does the job of adding excitement and energy to a skate run.

So is this game better than the incredible original? Here's my provocative answer: I believe that Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 is the best game of all time! There, I said it. I say it with passion and I'll continue to believe it until another game can fascinate me as much as this game does. I can play the same level for weeks and still freak out on what the game allows me to do every time I play it. **GR**



- LEVELS GENERATE NATURAL PROGRESSION
- ANIMATIONS AND FRAME RATE ARE SMOOTH AND ROCK SOLID
- PLAY MECHANICS ARE INGENIOUS
- PLAY AS SPIDERMAN

REPUBLIC SAYS... AWESOME GAME ON EVERY LEVEL.

A+

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CRASH BASH

BY BRADY FIECHTER

Naughty Dog says goodbye to Crash Bandicoot, leaving the golden license in what looks to be capable hands

Naughty Dog's still mum about what's brewing in its PS2 development lab, but as long as it's not Way of the Warrior 2, the result will certainly justify the abandonment of one Crash Bandicoot: platformer god, kart racing king, PlayStation icon—and now, under the direction of Eurocom, party-game contender.

Crash Bash is designed to encase the tone and personality of the Crash Bandicoot universe in a collection of several completely different arena events. As with any game in the genre, Crash Bash is at its best with the human dynamic sitting next to you for rounds of verbal sparring and heated competition; a friend can even jump into the adventure mode to aide you in unlocking all the boards. Trophies, gems and crystals are collected for access to boss battles, which lead to new areas that add a variety of twists to the general set of games, ramping up the difficulty level with handicaps.

From the pogo-stick-hop competition to the bumper-ball shootout to the army tank duel, the events in Crash Bash are all cleverly designed in their simplicity. Some are much more fun than others, but they're all tied together well in the single-player competition to keep play addictive and challenging. More of an emphasis on calculated strategy instead of random chaos would have been welcome, and a few more levels wouldn't hurt, but most the oversights are saved by colorful visuals, strong design and the Crash appeal.

Crash Bash does a lot right, excelling as a single-player experience where most games in this genre fail, but don't expect to find a Bomberman level of involvement— the kind that keeps you and your friends locked away until exhaustion sets in. Do expect to enjoy seeing Crash Bandicoot back in action again, in an unexpected but welcome forum. **GR**

- ANYTHING WITH CRASH IS A GOOD START
- WORKS WELL AS A SINGLE-PLAYER GAME
- GRAB SOME FRIENDS AND WATCH THE HOURS DISAPPEAR
- GIVE ME MORE ARENAS AND MORE CONTROL

REPUBLIC SAYS... WHILE IT DOESN'T HAVE THE FIT AND FINISH YOU'D EXPECT FROM A CRASH GAME, THIS IS STILL AN EXCELLENT PARTY GAME.

B

MEDAL OF HONOR: UNDERGROUND

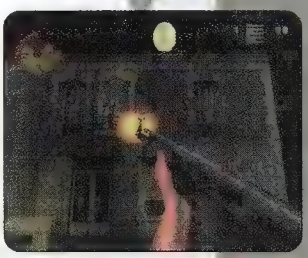
BY BRADY FIECHTER

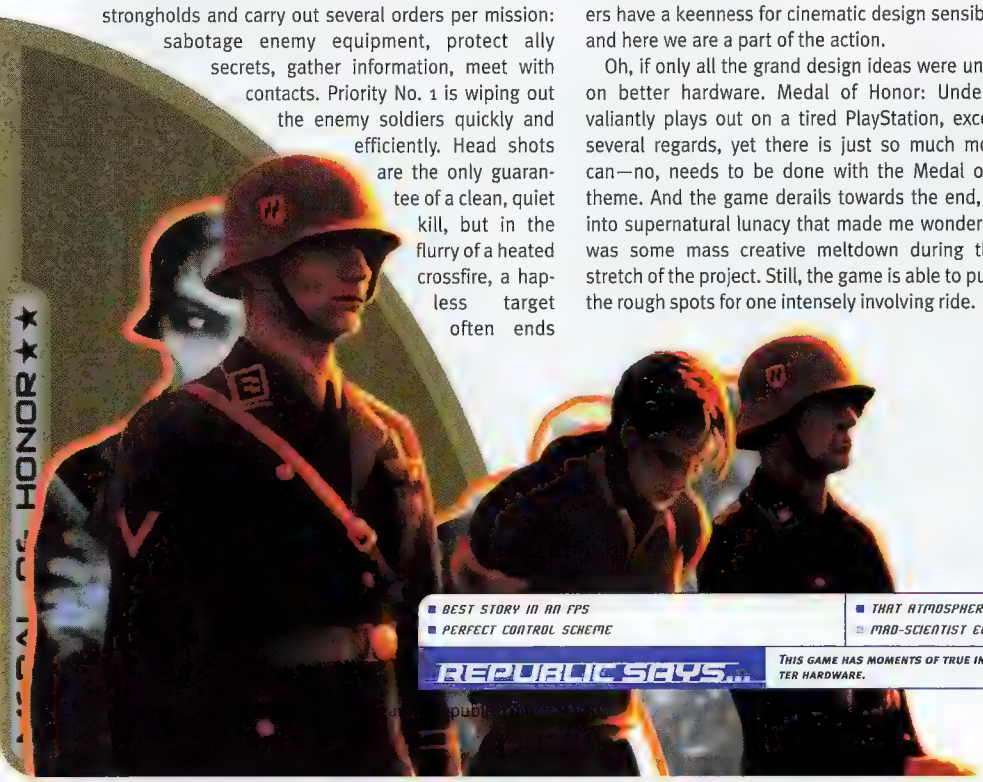
Note to development community: bold story telling does make a difference in a first-person shooter. In this uniquely engaging follow-up to the highly accomplished Medal of Honor, the purpose of each mission is compelling and detailed, lending an uncommon conviction to the pounding action. Based on actual accounts of World War II, the game's fiction intertwines with a gripping reality that sweeps us into its densely atmospheric battlegrounds.

As a top member of an underground French resistance movement, it is Madam Manon's job to infiltrate Nazi strongholds and carry out several orders per mission: sabotage enemy equipment, protect ally secrets, gather information, meet with contacts. Priority No. 1 is wiping out the enemy soldiers quickly and efficiently. Head shots are the only guarantee of a clean, quiet kill, but in the flurry of a heated crossfire, a hapless target often ends up getting pelted on the limbs and torso, collapsing to the ground while he tries to crawl away—the prime opportunity for that head shot (this game is brutal).

The animation routines are graphically convincing, working with an extraordinary use of sound and excellent environment design to build situations that can border on the disturbing. In one of the game's best levels, blithe German wartime music floats through the nighttime air, contrasted by the distant shouts of Nazi soldiers and the piercing crackle of weapons fire. It's a setup that would be fitting for a World War II movie—the developers have a keenness for cinematic design sensibilities—and here we are a part of the action.

Oh, if only all the grand design ideas were unchained on better hardware. Medal of Honor: Underground valiantly plays out on a tired PlayStation, excelling in several regards, yet there is just so much more that can—no, needs to be done with the Medal of Honor theme. And the game derails towards the end, veering into supernatural lunacy that made me wonder if there was some mass creative meltdown during the final stretch of the project. Still, the game is able to pull out of the rough spots for one intensely involving ride. GR





- BEST STORY IN AN FPS
- PERFECT CONTROL SCHEME
- THAT ATMOSPHERE. THAT MUSIC!
- MAD-SCIENTIST ELEMENTS NEED TO GO

REPUBLIC SAYS... THIS GAME HAS MOMENTS OF TRUE INSPIRATION. IT DESERVES TO BE LIBERATED ON BETTER HARDWARE.

B+

SPYRO: YEAR OF THE DRAGON

BY BRADY FIECHTER

Bringing along a few of his friends for support, Spyro soars to to new heights. It's the best game yet in the series

In one of the many mini-games that are uncovered in the main worlds of Spyro: Year of the Dragon, a whimsical little ice dancer is practicing her routine, but sharing the ice with a hockey team proves a nuisance when the players want nothing more than to send this little cutie crashing to the ice. She requests your assistance, and if you're able to fend off the charging behemoths, an egg—many are scattered across the land, to be collected for access to later areas—becomes your reward. When I played this sequence, I couldn't hold back the laughter, and I got the sense that Insomniac wore the same smiles when they envisioned it. Like the rest of the laughs in the game, its humor is sly and smart in its subtlety, and like the look and mood of Year of the Dragon, so charming.

Spyro the Dragon's greatest strength has always been in its delightful, colorful presentation, and this third adventure is the best yet. While the game could be accused of treading over familiar territory, there's still such an overwhelming energy of creativity and personality and skilled craftsmanship flowing through Year of the Dragon that I was once again caught in the designers' spell.

Spyro hasn't been given any new moves, and his gameplay objective hasn't changed much—collect valuables, glide, run and jump, charge and spit fire—but Insomniac added the effective element of additional playable characters to add more variety and interesting predicaments. Spyro is still the star of this creative show, but the four critters that pop up in a few of the game's worlds are cleverly integrated and, admittedly to my surprise, a blast to play; any of these characters could carry his own game.

Insomniac has proven with each game in this series that they are at the top of their game, dipping into the PlayStation's visual paint box with glowing results. With a clumpy, angular, cartoon simplicity, the character designs are unique and perfectly appealing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 126 ▸

- BIG ON CHARM AND PERSONALITY
- NO WAY CAN THIS GAME LOOK ANY BETTER ON PS
- NEW CHARACTERS ALMOST AS FUN AS THE MAIN QUEST
- TONS OF MINI-GAMES

REPUBLIC SAYS... YEAH, YEAH, SO WHAT IF IT'S NOT THAT MUCH OF A CHANGE FROM THE LAST GAME. STILL THE BEST IN THE SERIES AND MY FAVORITE 3D ACTION-PLATFORMER ON PS.

A-

MEGA MAN LEGENDS 2

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

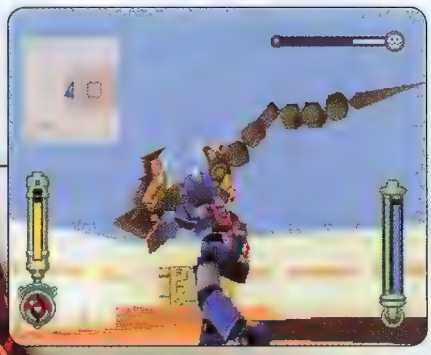
Mega Man faces a vast new world and mysteries from the past in his return to 3D. And so the legend continues...

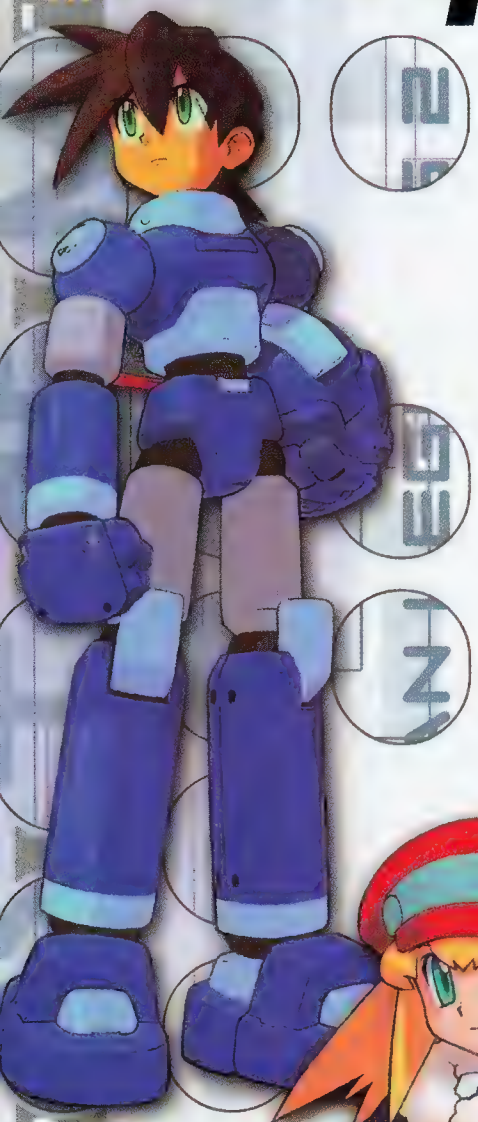
The blue bomber busted out of his 2D confines a few years ago in Mega Man Legends, and now he's back for more. Mega Man Legends 2 is bigger and better than the original, if only by a small margin. To be brief, if you liked the first MML, you'll like this one. If you didn't, then you'll want to pass. Capcom is sticking to the same action-RPG formula as the first game, as Mega Man explores numerous ruins and blows the scrap out of hordes of angry Reaverbot mechs.

The main enhancement to MML2 is that it's much more open than its predecessor. Instead of being confined to a single island with one city, Mega Man, Roll and company get to explore an entire world, filled with tons of characters and vast new environments. Gone is the stone-and-concrete look of before; each level, including underwater ruins, a snow field and Middle East-inspired volcanic chambers, has its own distinct look. The environments sport better, more natural-looking textures, while the cartoon feel has been retained. Backed by an intriguing sci-fi story that delves into the characters' pasts, and good, if lighthearted, voice acting, MML2 often seems like a fully controllable anime.

In most other regards, the game plays just like before. There are still tons of power-up items, and the control is identical. On the bad side, the questionable underground draw distance is back as well.

The biggest problem, however, is that the heavy diet of dungeon exploring can get pretty tedious. Despite a few mini-games (such as racing and a strange quiz game), MML2 just feels like it needs more than searching and blasting (maybe stealing bosses' weapons or something...that's a hint, Capcom). It's still a solid, fun title, but it's not quite legendary. GR





- BIGGER, MORE VARIED ENVIRONMENTS
- ENHANCED ANIME-STYLE GRAPHICS
- GOOD STORY AND VOICE ACTING
- EXPLORE/SHOOT FORMULA GETS TEDIOUS

REPUBLIC SAYS... STICKING TO THE FORMULA OF THE ORIGINAL, MML2 IS A SOLID, LIGHTHEARTED ADVENTURE THAT SHOULD BE A HIT WITH FANS OF THE FIRST.

B-

ZELDA MAJORA'S MASK

BY BRADY FIECHTER

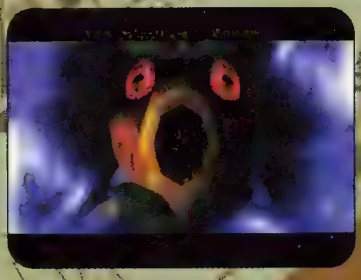
Don't for a second pass this off as a simple side quest, an afterthought before Link jumps to Gamecube. The Zelda magic is here

The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask is a marvelous adventure, brimming with enchantment and rich storytelling. Like the Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, the power of the game is its ability to reach into our imaginations, delivering us into strange and mysterious sights.

With the game bears a familiar Zelda definite, an unexpectedly dark tone never seen before. Within moments you are introduced to this world of Termina. Link awakens from a disturbed trance, awakening the delusion of his crystal space. He realizes Navi is still there, and the main escapes into the shadows of the forest. Link takes pursuit into a cave, where he is cursed and mutilated as a Deku Scrub. The mysterious assailant taunts Link, leading him into the Clock Town, where he meets with the Mask Collector, a fat man, speaks man who carries a massive assortment of rare masks around on his back. One of these masks, known as the Mask of Majora, was stolen by Skull Kid, the young boy who wounded Link. The mask harnesses an impressible powers, and Skull Kid has rallied upon its magic to summon the moon to plunge and ruin the moons and destroy Termina.

When the Mask of Majora has taken its control, it returns to return that Link have the time to locate the Skull Kid and remove the cursed mask. One 72 hours remain before the moon will fall in apocalyptic destruction, but with the immediate retrieval of the Ocarina, Link can repeatedly travel back in day one to continue his quest.

Clock Town serves as the



game's central hub, offering shops, conversation, games and a few important puzzles to solve. On the outskirts of town lie four main dungeons, hidden in the mountains, ocean, desert and sea.

Before Link can enter a dungeon to retrieve the guardian spirit, all sorts of complex puzzles must be solved and deeply involving tasks completed at villages, hideouts, caves and temples. The intimate setting of Majora's Mask is a complete, compelling place for exploration, a fairy-tale land sprung to vivid life.

Staple Zelda items like the Lens of Truth, arrows and the hook shot are located in dungeons, granting Link deeper passage into previously explored territory, but the centerpiece of the gameplay stems from the power of three individual masks that transform link into a Deku Scrub, which allows him to shoot out from flowers and glide across long distances with the lift of helicopter petals; a Goron, which has boulder-crushing strength and the ability to roll into a spiked ball; and Zoro, an elegant creature that swims with a dolphin's grace and speed. Other masks can also be found, imbuing Link with such strengths as increased speed and jumping and the ability to attract fractured fairies, but these masks are not necessary in completing the game. Locating the most important items is always a challenge, and careful attention must always be paid to the passage of time, because many events unfold only after the sun has set or another day has passed. This is certainly one of the more unique gameplay ideas in a long time.

In Japan, Majora's Mask was considered a side story, and I must admit that I had low expectations for what was also the first Zelda game with little input from the great Miyamoto. What a surprise it was to discover a game wholly worthy of the Zelda name. **GR**

- LOOKS BETTER THAN OCARINA OF TIME
- A FAIRY TALE WORLD IS BROUGHT TO LIFE
- WEARING MASKS AND MANAGING TIME A UNIQUE DYNAMIC
- SO MUCH TO DO, SO MUCH TO EXPLORE, SO MUCH TO LOVE

REPUBLIC SAYS... DO ME A FAVOR: PLAY THIS MARVELOUS GAME AND SEE IF YOU THINK IT'S BETTER THAN OCARINA OF TIME.

A-

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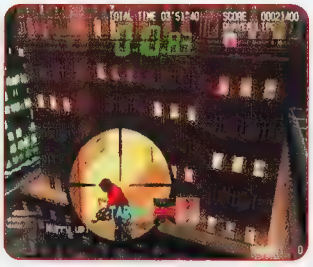
SILENT SCOPE

review by s. akinnuso • dev/pub: konami • avail: now

PS2 B+

There's something to be said for a gun game that creates such atmosphere and tension, it converts non-gun-game fans like me into NRA preaching fools. All this, of course, from an arcade port that's so solid, you don't even need the gun to play it. Konami's PS2 Silent Scope is all about atmosphere. Using the shoulder R buttons to disengage your sniper sight, and the analog to navigate your rifle's nozzle, the control is so well-honed that you forget the original arcade's insistence on the faux rifle. With such varied missions as swiftly silencing helicopter pilots, maniac terrorists on football fields, and mobsters disguised as hostages, Silent Scope is the arcade-perfect shooter faithfully ported to PS2, and the most fun I've had with a game like this since Time Crisis. **GR**



POLARIS SNOCROSS

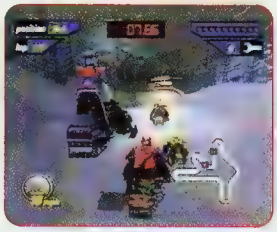
review by b. flechter • dev: vicarious visions • pub: vatical • avail: now

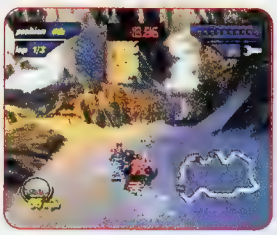
PlayStation D-

Why would a snowmobile racing game surround you with pleasant bird chirping noises? You're supposed to be riding machines that growl with a deafening noise and you're supposed to be wearing thick helmets; you'd be lucky to hear a 12-gauge go off.

More questions arise while playing Polaris SnoCross: Why does the competition ram into you with unchecked aggression, catapulting your stiff, stick figure of a body head first into the snow? This isn't Destruction Derby. And why do the engines sound like vacuum cleaners being lifted off the carpet when you enter tunnels? Why does the muddy snow kicking off the treads look like popcorn? Why do the snowmobiles feel like wobbly futuristic space ships. Are those riders with the Karateka-inspired animations doing tricks or trying to punch you off your sled? And is that mountain range in the background supposed to look fractured and pixelated to simulate an effect of crusted ice on goggles?

Maybe when this hits the reject bin at Blockbuster, you can buy it with the change left from your movie rental and have fun coming up with some questions of your own. **GR**



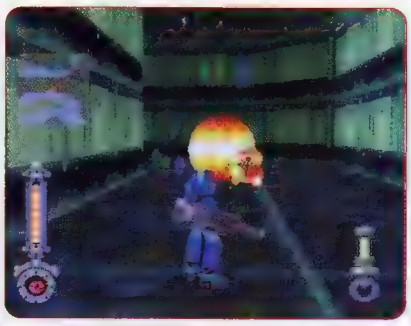


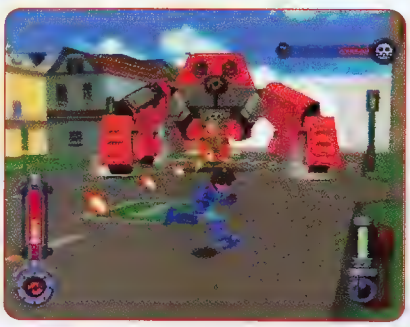
MEGA MAN 64

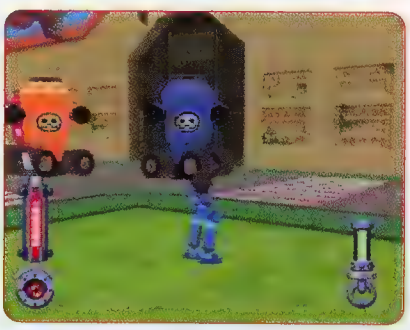
review by c. hoffman • dev/pub: capcom • avail: november

N64 C

Mega Man has finally arrived on the N64, but his debut is far less than spectacular. For whatever reason, instead of making a new adventure, Capcom has opted to port the two-year-old PS game Mega Man Legends and retitle it Mega Man 64. So if you're going to port an old game to superior hardware, the least you can do is enhance it, right? Well, apparently Capcom doesn't think so. This version is actually more flawed than the original. The frame rate is actually choppier at times, and the voices aren't quite as crisp. Other aspects, like the character models and the textures, are identical, save for the trademark N64 blur effect. Worse, the massive draw-in and pop-up hasn't gone away. The controls are a problem too. While I'm very thankful they included digital as well as analog controls, they could have made better use of the buttons; you now have to hold both rotation buttons to lock-on to enemies, which means it's impossible to circle-strafe. The game is still somewhat fun and charming, but why get this when Mega Man Legends 2 is already available? Outside of the WonderSwan version, this has to be the worst Mega Man game out there. **GR**





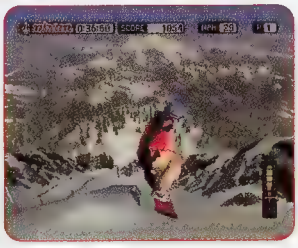


COOL BOARDERS 2001

review by s. akinnuso • dev: idol minds • pub: sony • avail: now

C

Admittedly, this series has come a long way since the abysmally sluggish Cool Boarders 1 & 2. Idol Minds (the developers who took over after UEP Games) deserves a pat on the back for making gravy out of what I considered basically over-hyped poo. Cool Boarders 2001 is now, at least, playable. Controls are more responsive (you no longer navigate turns by pushing so hard to the right or left that your thumb bleeds), feeling more arcade-oriented than a weak simulation. There are new trick animations during the quick race and Career modes, and taking a nod from Tony Hawk, there's now a noticable play difference between boarders. Feeling is justifiably determined by skater attributes, and not by awkward programming. All these are decent additions, but there's not nearly enough here to warrant a look—especially with the mighty SSX drawing comparisons on PS2. GR



CHAMPIONSHIP SURFER

review by s. akinnuso • dev: krome • pub: mattel interactive • avail: now

C

Newly formed Mattel Interactive came out of the gate running this year with a lineup of games for every console, but the most polished, and perhaps most interesting, goes to the rough-looking, strangely appealing, but mercilessly difficult, Championship Surfer for the Dreamcast. There's a worthless tutorial that helps little in figuring out exactly how the game is played, but your surfboard (once you figure out the timing for mounting it) controls with brisk precision as it dances on the crests of 20 foot waves. Surfers may scoff at the often jerky physics. More confusing than not, the game's difficulty and exoticness seem to cater to surfers first, casual gamers second—a slight oversight by a company new to gaming. Yet there's an awkward logic to controlling your stick and cutting the waves. Mattel's surf sim (with an easier arcade mode for novices) tries hard to be true to some feeling of surfing, perhaps sacrificing too much of its solid gaming potential. A rental at least, Champion Surfer is a time gobbler with payoffs satisfactory only to the persistent. GR

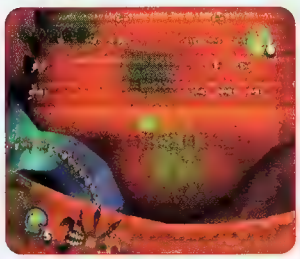
FROGGER 2

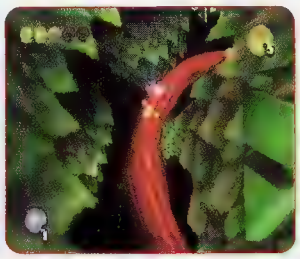
review by b. fiechter • dev: blitz/majesco • pub: hasbro • avail: now

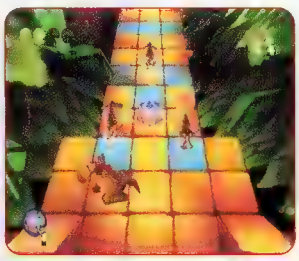
B-

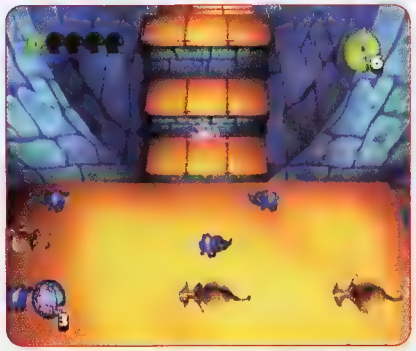
Almost twenty years ago, Coleco introduced miniature, table-top arcade units housing such games as Frogger, Pac-Man, and Zaxxon. I was a proud owner of the entire collection—schoolmates loved me—but my very favorite was the transfixing Frogger, in which a frog jumped on logs and alligators and hopped across traffic-infested streets to get to the other side.

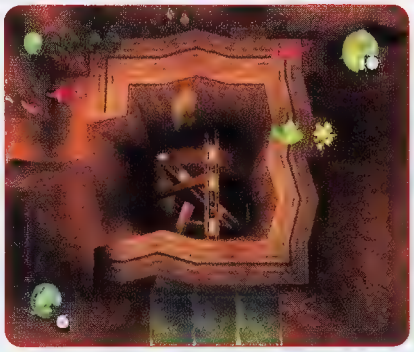
My, how things have changed. But despite where we've come and where we're going, those nostalgic memories are always going to lead developers to hold on to the classics. So here we are with Frogger 2 on Dreamcast, and the game goes something like this: a frog jumps on logs and alligators and hops across traffic-infested streets to get to the other side. And this being Frogger 2 for the new millennium, the frog also avoids boulders, fire, pits, spikes, monsters, machinery, has a double jump, slides down slopes, gets dropped into a factory and a jungle and a backyard, interacts in bright, colorful environments and performs a good bit of platforming duties. Makes you remember just how much fun perpetual-reflex and pattern-based gameplay used to be. GR

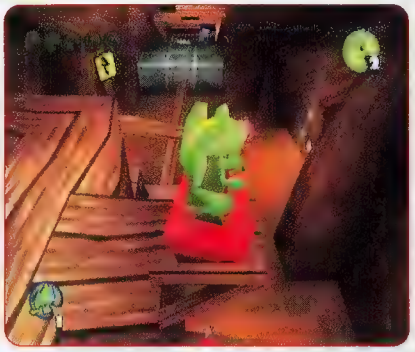








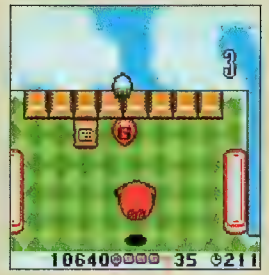




PORTABLE GAMING ANALYSIS GAMES MOBILIZED

Kirby's Tilt 'n' Tumble dev: hal · pub: nintendo · avail: december previewed by chris hoffman

The technology behind Kirby's Tilt 'n' Tumble is just incredible. Who thought that waving your Game Boy around could be so much fun? A cross between a platformer and a pinball game, the latest adventure for Nintendo's pink puffball actually has players controlling Kirby by tilting their Game Boys with a motion-sensitive cartridge. The physics feel great; the more you tilt, the faster he'll roll, and you snap the GBC upward to jump. It actually feels like you're controlling a real object rolling around in the Game Boy! As for the gameplay, it's up to players to guide Kirby through several levels of enemies and obstacles and just make it to the end (and defeat any bosses that are lingering around). Although it's unclear if Kirby can steal enemies' powers, he can definitely transform into a flying balloon Kirby for a limited time where he can shoot down his foes. Leave it to Nintendo and Hal to come up with something as wild as this.

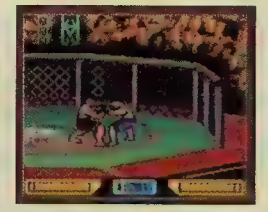


metal walker dev/pub: capcom · avail: november reviewed by chris hoffman

At first glance you'll probably think that Metal Walker is just another ripoff trying to capitalize on the success of Pokemon. And to some extent you'd be right. Though Metal Walker deals with robots (not monsters), the graphics, characters and game design seem like they were torn straight from Nintendo's phenom, right down to a metal ball that yells "Piki!" However, you don't collect other robots. Instead, you explore the game trying to find elemental Core Units to evolve your robot. Combining these units gives your robot new abilities so that you can jump gaps, destroy obstacles, or travel through water, and the game world slowly opens up as you gain new powers. Another unique feature is the billiards-like battle system where you bounce off walls and into enemies to damage them. Not quite turn-based and not quite real-time, the fighting is unlike anything else and requires a good deal of strategy. Unfortunately, the emphasis is mostly on the combat, so the far-too-frequent battles get old quickly, while the writing and quest seem more like afterthoughts. The great mech designs and evolving concept almost get lost in the tedium. **C+**

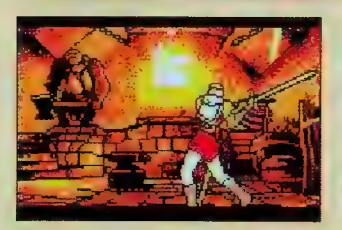
UFC dev: fluid studios · pub: crave · avail: november previewed by chris hoffman

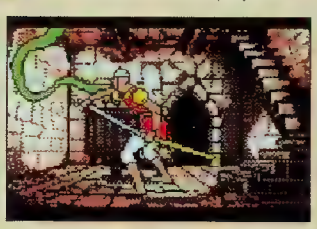
Crave's hit UFC game is being shrunk down for Game Boy Color. Featuring all the authentic UFC styling that made the DC version so good, UFC goes portable with Championship, Versus and Survival modes, and eight real-life fighters: Tito Ortiz, Kevin Randleman, Frank Shamrock, Eugene Jackson, Chuck Lidell, Guy Mezger, Pedro Rizzo and Evan Tanner.

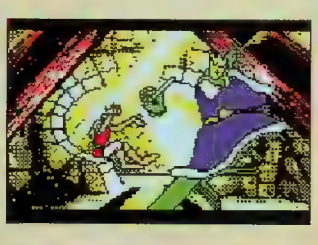


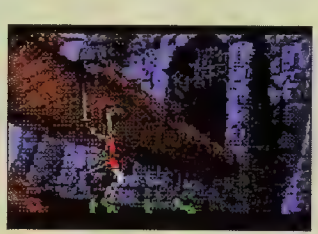
dragon's lair dev: digital eclipse · pub: capcom · november reviewed by chris hoffman

What the bloody heck happened to Dragon's Lair? While it's always been arguable that Dragon's Lair is all looks and no gameplay, that's never been more true than with the Game Boy version. Last issue I was singing the praises of how well they amazingly re-created the game's gorgeous FMV, and while that still holds true, they forgot to add anything else. You probably already know how Dragon's Lair plays: you watch for onscreen cues, then hit the appropriate buttons. Do it quick and correct and you succeed; do it wrong and it's to the underworld for Dirk the Daring. However, in this version of Dragon's Lair, you can either play a tutorial mode with onscreen commands, or the full game where you simply have to guess. Though the controls are forgiving, you get no continues, and when you die, you reappear at another random part of the game, so you hardly get a chance to learn the commands through trial and error. Could you imagine dying in Mario and reappearing in another random level? File that under "Lamest Ideas Ever." To be honest, I thought (and hoped) I was playing an incomplete version of the game. Great to watch, but unplayable. **C-**









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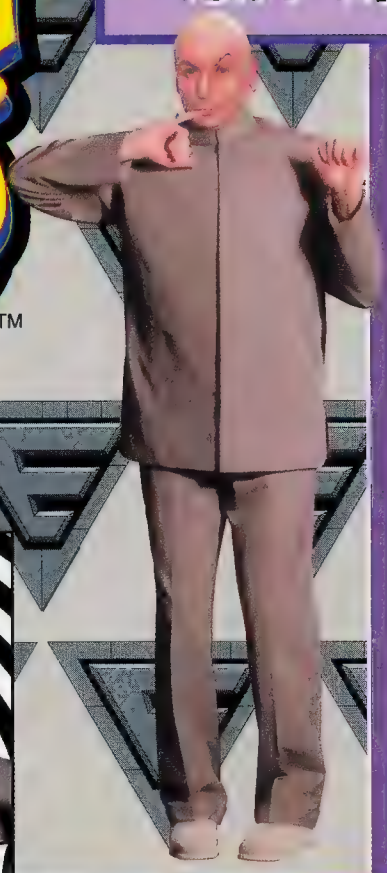

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TEEN
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GAME BOY COLOR

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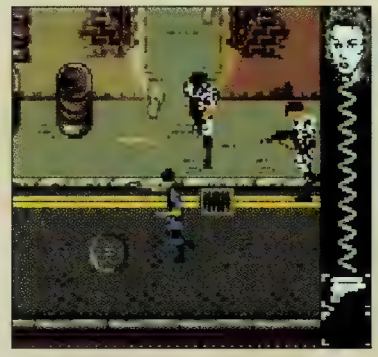
perfect dark dev: rare • pub: nintendo • avail: now reviewed by chris hoffman

How do you take one of the most celebrated N64 first-person shooters and turn it into a decent Game Boy cart? By putting it into top-down 2D and borrowing a few tricks from Solid Snake, that's how. Part action shooter and part stealth adventure, Perfect Dark suffers from a bout with multiple personality disorder but still manages to be varied and fun. The core of the game consists of running around and shooting down enemies with a variety of weapons while completing various tasks, but often you'll have to sneak around if you don't want to be gunned into pieces, so learning patterns and employing strategy is a must. Unfortunately, one of the game's flaws is that this turns into guesswork since you can't scroll the screen like you can in Metal Gear, and a blunder can cost you big. Graphically, the game is exceptional, and the audio (complete with digitized speech) is also good, plus, the game is filled with mini-games such as a driving level and first-person Operation: Wolf-style shooting areas. What's more, this game makes use of just about every peripheral and feature for the GBC, including the printer, link cable and rumble technology. Joanna Dark's Game Boy Color adventure obviously doesn't match up to the might of its N64 counterpart, but it's still decent in its own right. **B**

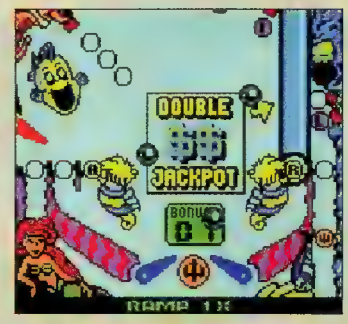


sf rush 2049 dev: handheld games • pub: midway • avail: now reviewed by chris hoffman

Why they decided to call this game San Francisco Rush 2049 I do not know. Having very little to do with the coin-op of the same name, this game is a stripped-down RC-style 3/4 overhead racer without any of the thrills of arcade racing. The action is extremely basic without any weapons to spice things up, and only a handful of turbo boosts propel you to the finish line faster. The graphics of the ten courses are extremely plain and look like something that should have been on the Game Boy a decade ago, and the music isn't any better. It's also very annoying that instead of saving your progress to a battery, you get passwords for each new track you open up, which need to be re-entered every time you play. And would it have killed them to put in a map? Racing at its most substandard. **C-**

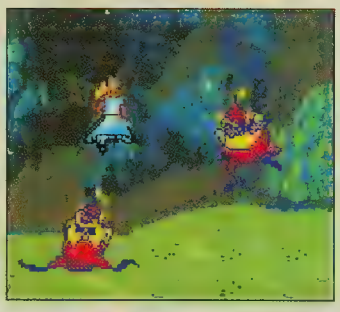
the little mermaid II: pinball frenzy dev: left field • pub: nintendo • avail: now reviewed by chris hoffman

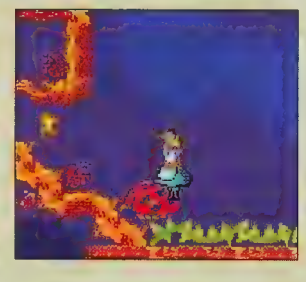
I realize that cute, kiddie games aren't usually the stuff we cover in Games Mobilized, but The Little Mermaid II: Pinball Frenzy actually came as quite a playable surprise. As far as pinball games go, this one is actually very good. The programmers at Left Field really went to town, including all the bells and whistles you'd hope a game like this would have—lots of loops, multiple flippers, multi-ball play, and plenty of targets to aim for. The scoring/bonus system is very deep, physics are excellent, and even a multitude of mini-games are included. The trademark Disney aesthetic also shines through, with majestic, colorful boards featuring the characters from the films. Even the movie music is included, if you care about that stuff. I just wish there were more than two boards. Nonetheless, Pinball Frenzy is solid, relaxing fun. Besides, any game with a chick wearing nothing but seashells can't be all bad. **B**



alice in wonderland dev: digital eclipse • pub: nintendo • avail: now reviewed by chris hoffman

I was hoping that Alice in Wonderland would be another game from Nintendo that, like Pinball Frenzy, transcends age with its gameplay. Unfortunately, that's not the case. Obviously aimed squarely at younger players, AIW combines platform action with adventure elements and mini-games that aren't bad at all but aren't particularly engaging either. AIW is standard 2D stuff - jump on enemies, hop on moving platforms, collect all the icons and move on; that we've all seen before. Eventually, you'll reach a central hub where you have to find specific objects hidden in each level to open up new areas, but that doesn't add much either. On the other hand, the graphics are very good - extremely colorful and detailed - and even feature warping backgrounds and reflections in the water. The animation is also quite nice, and the music borrows from the Disney flick (you'll have Mad Hatter tunes running through your head for a week if you play it). It all boils down to a game that's a great gift for little Sally but doesn't offer a lot for gaming enthusiasts. **C+**





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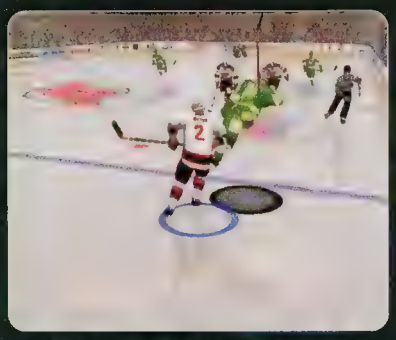
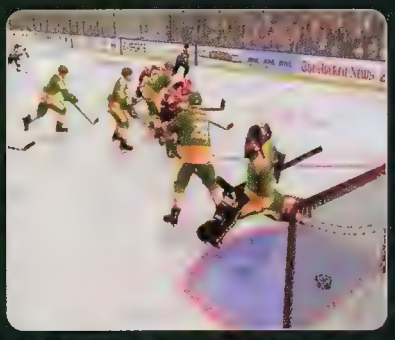




It's a shame that hockey video games are typically relegated to hockey fans, because a lot of people are going to miss out on this stunning title. The models in this game have got to be witnessed firsthand. The skating movements in NHL 2001 are so fluid and sweeping...there were times I thought that the skaters were humans, especially the way the uniforms crease and bend with the player movements. And checking an opponent into the boards and watching him crumble to his knees in pain has never felt so good.

Gameplay-wise, EA has included a momentum meter that increases for a team depending on the number of big checks, big shots, and great saves being performed. The play-by-play of NHL announcer Jim Hughson is absolutely superb, further bringing you into the complete gaming experience.

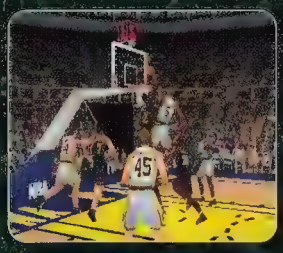
Got friends? With the new multi-user season play option, there is the ability to take on your friends (or enemies) throughout an entire NHL season to see who wins Lord Stanley's cup. With Madden and now this, sports gamers are gonna love their PS2. GR

gamers' republic sports

NHL 2001

by: m. puccini developer: ea sports publisher: ea available: november

PS2 A-



With a variety of options and gameplay modes, NBA Live 2001 is a great-playing, highly enjoyable title. But it's not perfect.

The seventh incarnation in EA's popular hoops franchise includes slight graphical upgrades and all the bells-and-whistles of last year's version—a one-on-one schoolyard game with Michael Jordan and All-Stars from the '50s through the '90s, the 3 Point Shootout contest, the create-a-player mode—as well as new moves—jump-hook shot, fade-away jump shot, up-and-under shot. Also new this year is the NBA Live Challenge, enabling the ability to unlock hidden attributes and graphical effects by completing certain objectives throughout a game and/or season.

But I found the AI to still be a little suspect in certain areas: defenders don't steal the ball when they should, the CPU-controlled teammates' rebounding needs help, CPU-controlled players don't take it to the basket when it's wide open, and I don't think that Jason Kidd would miss three free throws in a row.

With that said, the positives far outweigh the negatives in NBA Live 2001 to create a great basketball simulation. GR

gamers' republic sports

NBA LIVE 2001

by: m. puccini dev: ea sports pub: ea available: fall

PS B

NBA ShootOut 2001 has some nice features, but it just doesn't seem to be the all-around package that NBA Live 2001 is. To its credit, I found that calling sets and plays is easier than in Live, I liked the Touch Shooting Bar, which is a unique feature to ShootOut that helps determine each player's shooting range from around the court, and the Create-A-Dunk option was amusing.

I also became a fan of ShootOut's icon passing and icon switching, as it was easy because of the huge, overhead icons. And, although it's similar to that of Live in nature, the free throw mechanism in ShootOut is cooler and more challenging.

Although graphically Live looks cleaner and more polished, in the AI department, both have work to be done.

But in the end, I just didn't have as enjoyable a time with ShootOut as I did with Live. Still a solid game. GR

gamers' republic sports

NBA SHOOTOUT 2001

by: m. puccini dev: killer game pub: 989 sports available: fall

PS B-

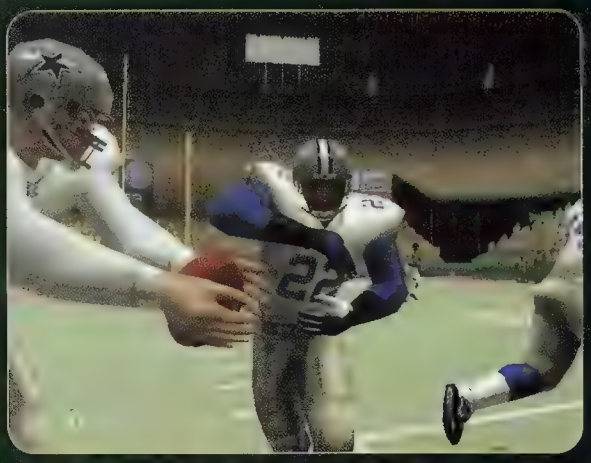
NFL2K1 screams second-generation in every way, a quality any type of gamer will appreciate no matter what system he or she may prefer. In less than a year, Visual Concepts has single-handedly proven the potential that can be unlocked from the Dreamcast in technical ability and have laid to waste any doubt about how efficient the 56k modem can be for its owners. Now this doesn't mean the game will convert non-sports gamers into fanatics of the genre, but it will definitely continue to evoke curiosity.

Ignoring the network abilities for a moment, it is apparent from the instant a game is started that NFL2K1 has been retooled with countless subtle details to keep the user amazed by its natural look and feel. Player models have been smoothed out with added polys, and textures have a definite contrast in matte and high-gloss, so now shiny surfaces (like visors) generate a mock reflection. And like last year, VC has gone through the painstaking process of mapping actual player faces to each of the onscreen characters; they're not three-dimensional, but they do blink and make facial expressions. Even the action on the sidelines, like photographers, coaches and other players, has been brought to life. Though simple, the effect it has is immeasurable in keeping with the authenticity of a real-life game.

Those of you who were blown away by the animation routines in last year's game will go insane with the new vigor experienced after hiking your first ball in 2K1. The defensive line will head track where the ball is and react not by proximity, but by area of sight. This affects the time and speed in which a defender reacts to your actions and plays a huge role, especially since the pump fake has been integrated into the offensive arsenal. Another example of the

smart engine is when a defender falls in the line of your run. Your player will automatically hurdle the lumbering walrus instead of being stopped, running though or tripping over him.

The difficulty settings are just about the only issue that I am having trouble accepting. The default setting evokes a false sense of confidence. Blasting through the first eight games can be a breeze and victory is often certain within the first two quarters. Bump it up one level to the Pro setting, and instantly games become a serious battle from week one. If the developers had adjusted the slide bar just a bit up in Rookie mode and a tad bit down in Pro, the player would have a better sense of understanding when to switch game



strategies and unlock a deeper level of gameplay.

With all of the improvements in visuals and AI, it's not surprising that the play mechanics have almost doubled. Simple innovations like a crawling direction meter help to instruct a more controlled approach to kicking the ball. Even cheat tactics have been tweaked. I'm sure many of you know and have used the ol' trigger button to try and fake out the other player for a fast five yards. Well, do it now and you might trigger your own man to cause the flag.

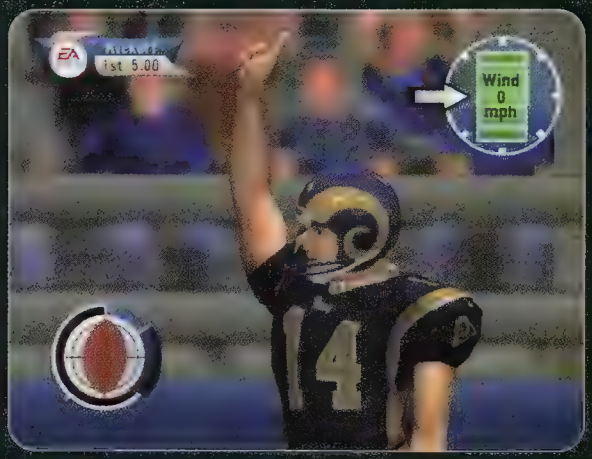
Now you might be asking yourself, "How does all this change and affect playing the game on SegaNet?" Well, I'll tell you. Though there are slight delays, they are most common when scrolling through menus or play books. I have yet to discover a hindrance during gameplay, but I usually head straight into a region with the least amount of users. Those of you who have a keyboard can flex your smack-typing fingers and pound out text messages back and forth as well.

I can only imagine all of the respect other developers must have for this game, just because of the smart manner in which the game is scripted. When wearing the critical hat of an analyst, it is easy to advise any video football fan, especially those who prefer Sega Sports games, to buy NFL2K1, no questions asked. It's the first true example of Sega's online plan, and it rules! GR

gamers' republic sports

NFL2K1

by: t. stratton developer: visual concepts publisher: sega available: now



There's something that bothers me about this game: all this PS2 power and no 60 fps cheerleaders? What's the deal here!?

By now you've probably heard or read the high praise and acclaim that has been bestowed upon the PS2 version of Madden NFL 2001. And justifiably so. I am so enamored with this game that when I'm not playing it, I'm thinking about playing it. This is by far and away the finest football game ever created.

The gorgeous graphics, from the player models to the stadium renderings, makes one pause and wonder, "How much better can it get?" (Well, actually, they could attempt to use the faces of real NFL players.) The 60 fps running animations are simply flawless. The only thing better than watching your small, swift running back or kick returner smoothly cut and juke through the field for a huge gain is watching the replay of it.

The inclusion of real NFL coaches and the Ask Coach button in the offensive menu is a great addition as he, if initiated, recommends the next play to choose and gives advice like, "No mistakes. Let's run the ball. No fumbles." Not only can you choose your plays by formation, but you can also choose them by key player. And what's more, the plays are named after that person. I play as the Raiders, and Tim Brown's plays all start with his first name — Tim Post, Tim Hook, Tim Slant, etc.

Madden NFL 2001 includes a truckload of added features: Upper Deck-brand electronic football cards, called Madden Cards, to collect and use in the game; Franchise mode for the truly diehard pigskin fanatic; excellent ambient sound effects; referees with articulated mouths and authentic motions; and the inclusion of the NFL Europe teams, as well as dozens of classic teams dating back to the dawn of the game. As a matter of fact, yes, that is a screen shot of the legendary Buffalo Bills Hall of Fame running back, O.J. Simpson, getting ready to slice and cut through the murderous defense as part of the '73 Bills (who are in the game because that year The Juice ran for a record 2,003 yards...just thought you'd like to know).

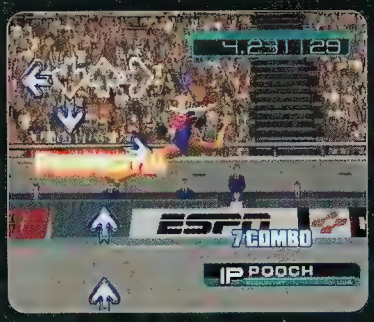
Is it wrong for me to already be looking forward to next year's installment and pondering what might be included? Perhaps online play? Individual crowd models? More players and activity on the sidelines? Or perhaps 60 fps cheerleaders? GR

gamers' republic sports

MADDEN 2001

by: m. puccini developer: ea sports publisher: ea available october

PS2 A



It's true that gamers invent creative ways to play track and field video games because of the inherent, speedy, frantic button pressing gameplay controls. I just invented a new style for the control of Konami's ESPN International Track & Field swimming event. Having to quickly and simultaneously press the L and R buttons, I put my legs together, turned the controller upside down and pounded it on my thighs. Sure I received second-degree bruises, but I set a world's record.

Directly comparable to Eidos' recently released Sydney 2000 Olympics game, IT&F wins the gold with an overall package that makes Sydney look like it accidentally slipped and crushed its nuts on a pummel horse.

There are 10 events—javelin throw, 100 meter dash, 110 meter hurdles, long jump, pole vault, 100 meter freestyle, weightlifting, horizontal bar, trap shooting and rhythmic gymnastics—with the best of the bunch being the DDR-influenced rhythmic gymnastics, the pole vault and the horizontal bar. And the trap shooting's control is so good that it highlights how truly bad the control is in the Sydney 2000 event.

Graphically, the models are beautiful, clean and seamless, running at 60 fps, and some show intricate detailing such as extreme muscle definition in the weightlifters' arms. The camera angles and replays are excellent, especially the underwater camera in the swimming event.

Konami has also added some replay value in the single-player game by making video clips, audio samples and an expert rhythmic gymnastics song available through acquiring a certain number of medals. With ESPN International Track & Field, Konami takes its T&F legacy and ushers in the PS2 generation in fine style. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

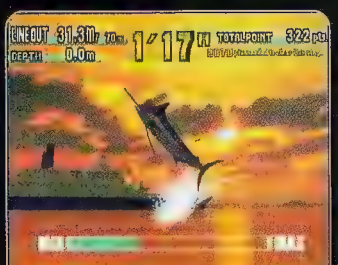
ESPN TRACK & FIELD

by: m. puccini developer: konami pub: konami available: now

PS2 B

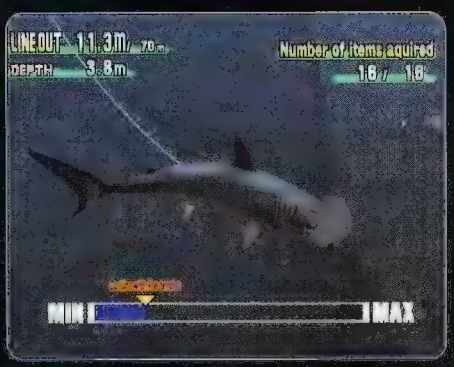
If you were shut out of the PS2 buying frenzy, don't fret; there are some incredible games for other systems available, including this sleeper title. Do yourself a favor and, if you don't already have it, go out and get the official Dreamcast fishing reel controller in preparation for the release of this deceivingly fun and addictive game; the peripheral adds so much life to playing Sega Marine Fishing.

Marvelous!



Even in this preview state, SMF, making use of Naomi technology, will probably end up as the best title the genre has ever seen. The experience of fighting and eventually reeling in a hammerhead shark is superb, as is watching a blue marlin shoot out of the water and soar into the sunset sky in an effort to free itself from your hook.

The overall presentation of the game is excellent: soothing music plays prior to a catch and then the frenetic music kicks in for battle; the camera cuts to a first-person view as the lure to watch a poor bastard take the bite; an overly excited Crazy Taxi-like voice shouts out during the battle; the swarthy boat mate, Masala, helps haul in the catches. Another exceptional aspect of the game are the little touches in the environments: uncatchable whales and sea turtles swimming by, a scientific robot skimming across the ocean floor, and cars, planes and boats moving about.



Also, the selection of aquatic creatures is outstanding with stingrays, mako sharks, barracudas, dolphin tunas, blue marlins, sailfish, and hammerhead sharks, just to name a few.

Check back next month for more on this stellar title, including the networking capabilities, extra features and the lowdown on Masala. **GR**

gamers' republic sports

SEGA MARINE FISHING

by: m. puccini developer: wow entertainment pub: sega available: fall

SHINING WISDOM

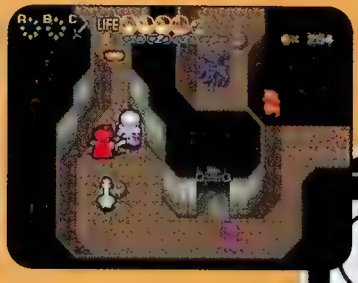
[publisher] w. designs
[genre] action/rpg
[system] saturn
[year] 1995

Before there was 3D (yes, there was such a time), RPGs were played predominantly in top-down environments. The illusion of 3D was created through the use of shadows, clever collision detection and, of course, proportional art. The first notable leap in the protocol came in the form of rendered elements, and one of the first games to do it, and do it well, was Sonic Team's Shining Wisdom. Masterfully translated and packaged by Working Designs (the then savior of the import RPG), the game graced the Sega Saturn in 1996 and stands as one of the most brilliantly designed labyrinth-style action-RPGs ever.

Anyone lucky enough to have played the original Legend of Zelda knows the type. Vast open areas littered with monsters, villages, castles, kingdoms, and valleys make way to complex labyrinths filled with peril, puzzles, mystery and, finally, a big boss. The first time through you almost always discover you need something new to pass, and so exploring you go, seeking out key characters and combing inhabited areas. The amount of mystical items in Shining Wisdom was (and still is) an ingenious assortment of tools and tricks, including all types of shoes, gloves, claws, mirrors, helmets, orbs, and even a monkey suit.

The control is unique too. Tapping a button makes Mars gain speed, which can be sustained as long as you hold it. In tandem with a variety of attacks and moves, this makes and keeps the overworld play deeply engaging. And then, of course, there's the game's super-deformed look. It's hard to describe how nicely all of the pint-sized rendered characters and creatures animate, but I'll tell you one thing, I can't get enough of it still. Shining Wisdom also contains one of the finest soundtracks you will ever hear; I still play the soundtrack religiously.

In a perfect world, the Sega Saturn would have thrived like the PlayStation and would still be doing so today. The king of 2D gaming, it's a shame that modern-day gamers were fooled into thinking that 3D was the only game in town. While it is a wonderful medium, it will never completely replace the magic of 2D and games like Shining Wisdom. **-Dave Halverson**



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WORLD REPUBLIC

[i] *True a lot of the Japan action is back in the TGS coverage but we've got some burning hot new Guilty Gear coverage, the best thing to hit the Gundam Universe since SD action on the SNES, and we show you how to play with your organ and a PS2 at the same time!*

sega dreamcast / dc

World Republic Preview • developer **arc system works** • publisher **sammy** • available in japan **fall**

GUILTY GEAR X

Rivaled only by Capcom's Street Fighter III series, Guilty Gear X is hands-down the most striking 2D animated fighter you will ever lay eyes on. We fought tooth and nail for our playable preview version when Arc System Works quietly distributed the three-level demo like contraband to the hungry press at the Tokyo Game Show. To say that we were blown away by the visual wallop this game packs would be an understatement.

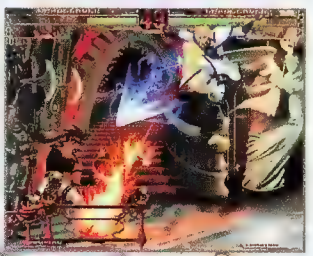
Using high-resolution 2D images, Guilty Gear is nearly pixel free running on Sega's Naomi board. Characters are cleanly shaded with silky smooth animation and constant background effects like clouds of smoke and power blasts pushing the hardware, and as impressive as the near-cell-like animation is, more astonishing are the strides Arc has made to the game engine.

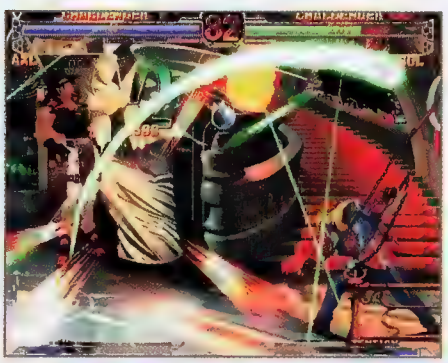
While Guilty Gear X moves only slightly slower than the original PS sleeper (to compensate for the increased animation), Arc System Works has balanced out the madcap combos (yes, you can still do air attacks, air/ground dashes, and insane chaining combinations) with several gauges that determine Capcom-esque additions like Super Meters, Guard Breaks, and your standard life meter.

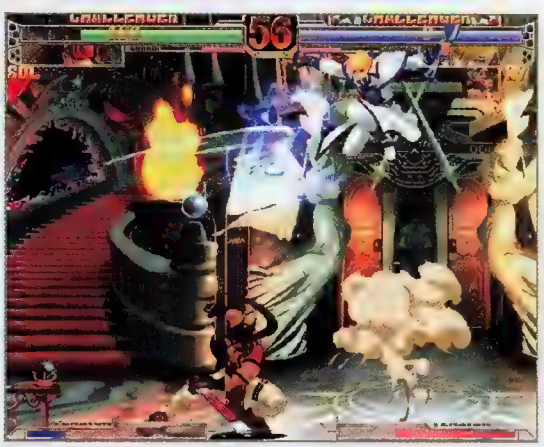
In the demo version we have, only Sol Badguy, May, and Kai were available and, so far, Arc System Works rearranged the execution of many of the attacks, changing much of the priority and curbing the power levels to facilitate more balanced matches. Emphasis has been placed on shorter, more strategic chains of moves, as opposed to getting in, charging up, and crushing your enemy with those familiar button-mashing attacks. Gone now are the annoying instant kills, replaced by an engine refined to force more attack-based strategies (activate your tension meter to use a more powerful version of your character with a constantly draining life bar), making Guilty Gear X, even at this early stage, one of the deepest 2D fighting engines available.

Full of SNK-like style and Capcom mechanics, Guilty Gear X is fast moving towards becoming the secret Dead or Alive of 2D fighting games. One thing is certain after playing this demo for nearly two days straight: Gamers' Republic will follow this masterpiece-in-the-making every step of the way.

-S. AKINNUSO







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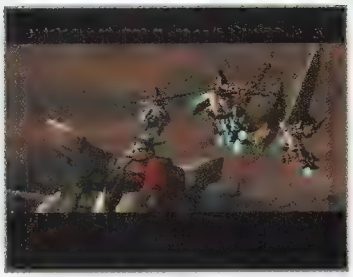
PS2 sony playstation 2 / ps2

World Republic Review • developer/publisher **sunrise** • available in japan **now**

G-SAVIOR



America has finally caught a severe case of Gundam fever. We've been showing symptoms for years, but with the advent of Bandai's new Shoujo anime series, *Gundam Wing*, all mech has broken loose. Where merchandise once hung you'll find empty hooks and the Toonami time slot is jam-packed with kids of all ages and gender. That said, it's only a matter of time before somebody sniffs out Sunrise's G-Saviour for the PS2, a simplistic though engaging action shooter. It's another new take on an old theme but, for the most part, it works.

In classic Japanese form, each mission starts with a close encounter of the so-cheesy-it's-cool kind as intel pours in from the Lightning Squad—commander Ben; intelligence officer, Asaka; and our star pilot, the brave Captain Reed. The levels are pretty straightforward: your Gundam walks and boosts while locking onto and annihilating stationary targets and rival assault suits. There's the odd timing sortie thrown in, but the level structure remains the same. Each assault culminates with a free-roaming boss encounter segueing into the real-time cut scenes, which exhibit rich skies and beautiful hi-res models. Such fodder would normally get tossed into my rainy day pile, but G-Savior's combination of a solid control interface, a multitude of beautifully modeled Gundams, and smooth 60-fps action makes G-Savior a highly playable affair.

Not nearly as cumbersome as Armored Core and only slightly less nimble then Gungriffon Blaze, for a third-person shooter the handling of the mechs is excellent. If Sunrise had included a quick about-face move, the control would be near perfection too. For a PS2 game though, I'm not all that impressed. The Dreamcast could not only handle this game, but could probably do it better. Then again, the fact that it's a PS2 game out of Japan where everything at least works is an achievement. If one thing puts the whole package over the top for me, it's the music, a sweet selection of classic Japanese melodies that you'll never tire of soaking in. Who will step up and claim the prize with the first Gundam game for the PS2 remains to be seen. **-D. HALVERSON**

B

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sega dreamcast / dc

World Republic Preview • developer/publisher **takara** • available in japan **oct**

DINO CRISIS

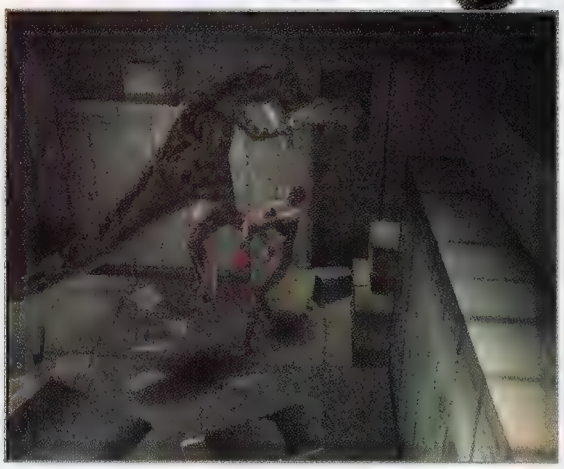
Dino Crisis raises an interesting problem: do I praise it for retaining its original craft from PlayStation, for its unmatched cinematic qualities, for the way it presents its action so effectively? Or do I follow the critical path most are taking when a PlayStation game is transplanted to the Dreamcast basically untouched, criticizing it as "just a cheap PS port"?

Screw that last part. Dino Crisis was a remarkable achievement on PlayStation, and now that it benefits from a solidified presentation, the game is even more intense on Dreamcast. Directed by Shinji Mikani, the talented mind who dreamed up the Resident Evil series, this is, put simply, survival horror with dinosaurs, perhaps even one-upping the classic zombie apocalypse that is RE.

Just look at the way the dinosaurs respond to your presence, crashing through grates and leveling doors, leaping across tables, roaring and charging with a wicked aggression. When they lie on the ground, resting, they struggle to get up under their massive weight, which is conveyed so convincingly, and they move with an eerie intelligence. Avoiding their attacks is more important than mounting an offensive, and controlling laser security fields to trap them is an incredible rush.

And then there's the puzzle solving. Penetrating all the lockouts in this enormous research facility is challenging and thought-provoking, engaging the side of your gaming mind that is seldom touched. Every single part of this game is inspired and effective, the work of gamemakers who are masters of their domain. And, yes, the game is visually spectacular, even on Dreamcast. Point all you want to those other games that have more polygons, then go back to Dino Crisis and pay attention to the beauty of artistry and creativity overstepping contrived complexity.

-B. FIECHTER



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PS2 sony playstation 2 / ps2

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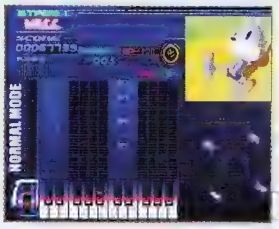
KEYBOARD mania



It was only a matter of time before Konami got around to making a keyboard-based Bemani game after Beatmania, Guitar Freaks, and Drummania had all proven to be very popular in arcades and at home. And now that I've had the chance to sample their latest on PS2, Keyboard Mania, I have to say that this is my favorite of the lot.

Using the included 24-key keyboard, Keyboard Mania plays like the other Bemani games in that you've got to play notes in time with falling bars over various background music. The difference here is that there are more notes to keep track of, a greater manual dexterity required to keep up. If you've never touched a keyboard, it's very difficult at first, easily the most difficult of all Bemani games, but as you gain proficiency, the game becomes hugely addictive.

And of all the Bemani games, Keyboard Mania has the most modern sounding music selections, along with a visual style that actually looks at home on the PS2, unlike the gaudy and basic Drummania and Guitar Freaks. KM has a dark and sleek look, with pleasing light shows and graphics during the music.

-M. HOBBS

PS2 sony playstation 2 / ps2

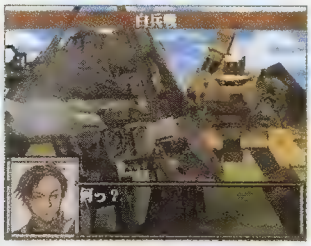
World Republic Preview • developer/publisher **konami** • available in japan **now**

RING OF RED

To say Konami has a strong PS2 lineup would be the understatement of the decade. Everyone knows about Metal Gear Solid 2 and Z.O.E., and Silent Hill 2 is next on the list, but strategy buffs should also take notice of Ring of Red, a turn-based title featuring giant mechs and superb production values. Its visuals are, of course, technically outstanding, but I'm even more impressed by the artistic design. Since the game takes place in the 1960s, the mechs are given a unique, almost primitive look—a breath of fresh air among all the Macross and Gundam copycats out there.

Konami has also seen fit to bless us with some exquisite hand-drawn art during dialogue and story intermission sequences. In terms of overall game structure, Ring of Red is highly reminiscent of Square's masterful Front Mission 3, mixing 2D overhead maps with fully polygonal battle scenes. Unlike in that game, however, these battle scenes allow limited interactivity as the player, for example, waits for his sniper rifle to zoom in and line up for a better shot before hitting the fire button. While not a monumental innovation, it does add another layer of strategic depth to the proceedings. RoR has not yet been announced for U.S. release, but we're hoping that Konami makes the right decision and translates it for an English-speaking audience.

-S. THOMASON



Playstation 2 Review

AMERICAN ARCADE

GAME BY ASTROLL

American Arcade is a pinball sim that takes you back to the romantic era of gaming, back to the wondrous days before flashy video and...um...actually, pinball back in the '50s and '60s kind of sucked. The boards were incredibly dull; there were no nifty corkscrew loops or interactive video displays, no digitized sound bites or twelve-ball play. Just a basic board, a few flippers (yes, more than two if you found a snazzy machine!), and a handful of slots and bumpers to score off of. Granted, American Arcade re-creates this experience very well, with five authentic-looking boards, true-to-life sound effects and nearly flawless ball physics (plus old rock songs playing in the background to further enhance the experience), but it's all just so boring compared to modern pinball. Even the challenge mode isn't exciting since all it does is open up more uninspired play machines. I'd love to see Astroll take the game engine and make a modern, photo-realistic pinball game with all the bells and whistles such a game should have, but this game is too boring to be for anyone but nostalgia nuts.

-C. HOFFMAN **C-**

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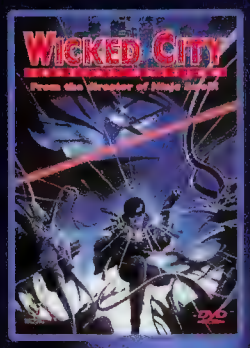

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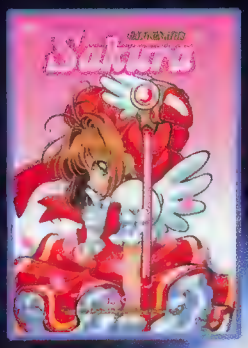

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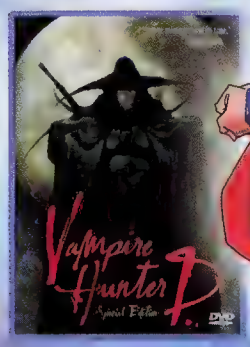

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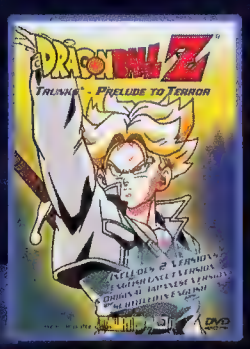

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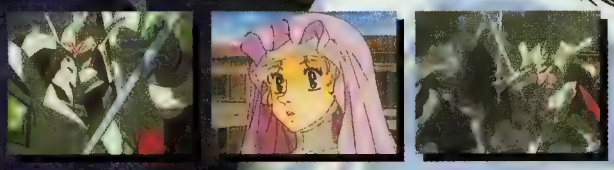
Escaflowne



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BLACK HEAVEN VOL. 1

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO
•2000 PIONEER ENTERTAINMENT
100 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★ ACTION/SCI-FI/ADVENTURE

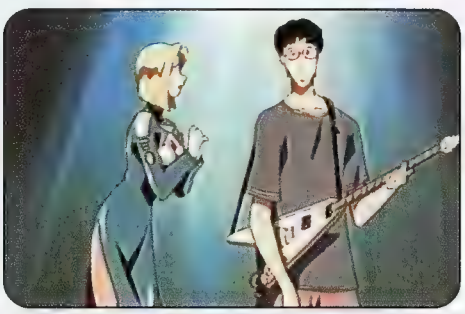
Judging from the tripped-out trailers and hard-rock theme, you'd think that *The Legend of Black Heaven*, called *Kacho Oji: Rock Saves The World* in Japan, would be a hero's quest injected with a fair bit of wailing guitar. Ideally, it's the cartoon-perfect symbiosis of music pushing legend. The original *BubbleGum Crisis* did it. So did *Robotech*. Judging by the description and images on the back of the Metallica-cum-anime slipcover, *Black Heaven*, with its '80s-mired plot to save the universe through heavy metal, has all the elements to be perfect—suitably cool and emotionally dictatorial. Remember Ralph Bashki's *Rock and Rule*?

To an extent, *Black Heaven: Rock Bottom*, the first four episodes of the series, is cool, just not in the way advertised.

Oji is the corporate cog in the sold-out machine. Downtrodden life. No aspirations. Father to a young son he barely knows, the only thing Oji cherishes is his guitar, a memoir from his days as the lead singer in the Black Heaven band (that too, a relic). When petitioned by aliens to produce a song to squash their evil enemies, you can't help but get all giddy for that moment when Oji reaches the apex of his growth, dons the painful rhythm, and plays his heart out to an angst-ridden vibe somewhere along "Instruments of Destruction," only, uh, angstier.

It's during the third episode, after the players have been established and the tone set, that your heart knows the angst moment ain't coming; that *Black Heaven* isn't the type of toon where melodrama is paramount to quirky comedy. Too many jokes have passed, too many odd characters have been introduced, and the internally-reflective-mood-meets-goofball theatrics seem jarring and far too tilted towards silly to be taken seriously. It's a shame, really. The hardcore intro of angry strings and pop-rock chorus kicks all kinds of ass.

Still, there's an abundance of style within Kazuto Nakazawa's design of the lanky, wholly unapologetic Oji. Art and animation are the crisp Pioneer production you'd expect from the folks that brought us *Lain* and *Sol Bianca*. There's a hero's quest of sorts, as Oji refocuses his life towards the responsibility of fatherhood. The story plays with heavy themes but fools no one. It's all about the laughs. My girlfriend thought it was a riot (called it cute). I laughed (grudgingly) because, well, it's funny. Still, you can't fault me for wanting my angst. With the title "Black Heaven," this should've reeked of it. GR



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MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH OVA - VOL. 2

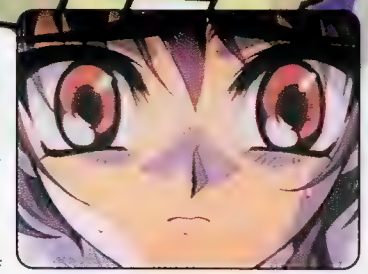
REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 MANGA ENTERTAINMENT
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★ FANTASY/ADVENTURE

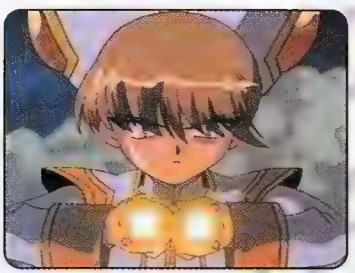
Coming into the second tape of the *Rayearth* OVA series, one starts to wonder why exactly this series was made. This is not to say that it is subpar in any way, but the entire series seems to be extraneous after watching the original *Magic Knight* series. Anything that comes from CLAMP is, as expected, always beautiful, even if it is a bit pointless. Few series go back and try to retell a story by going down a different path, which is exactly what this new series of Rayearth is attempting to do. Perhaps this anime just allows die-hard Rayearth fans to revisit Hikaru, Fuu, and Umi and follow them on a quest once again. Rayearth OVA has the benefit of being succinct and faster moving than the original. Fighting and plot twists start almost immediately, but I think this causes it to lose a bit of the charm of the original series.

Hikaru and her spirit beast have defeated Alcyion, but she was injured while doing so. While lying unconscious on the battlefield, Hikaru is rescued by a dark stranger who keeps a wolfish spirit beast with him at all times. As Hikaru awakes and realizes that she has been rescued, she is forced to confront her savior. The strange man forces her to think about why she is worthy of having a spirit beast as a companion. Hikaru is under the impression that she needs the power of the beast to save the world, but the strange man disagrees with her. He traps her in a maze and forces her to find out the real reason why she is fighting.

Umi and Fuu are convinced that their friend Hikaru is dead, her life given to save their own lives. But the fights are not over yet. Clef tries to protect the girls to the best of his ability, but their adversaries are much too strong. Umi and Fuu are separated and they both realize that their role in the preservation of their world has just begun. As Hikaru had to battle their enemies, so do Umi and Fuu.

Once again beautiful character design and wonderful animation make *Rayearth* one of the best pieces of eye candy on store shelves. However, so far, the story has become predictable, and the change of scenery stagnant. Battles taking place in a deserted and partially destroyed Japanese urban sprawl have been done since the days of *Bubblegum Crisis*. The first *Rayearth* series took the girls to another world, enabling the scenery to be as whimsical and liquid as clouds. The predictability of this plot, however, really hurts this anime. Unfortunately, many of the ideas and themes seem recycled, and it brings about the question once again, "Why did they bother to make this anime anyway?" Somehow out of the predictability rises an anime that really is worth watching. GR





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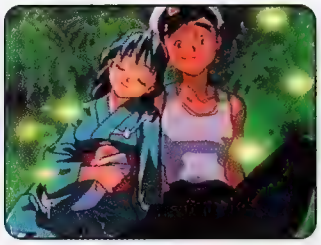
VIRGIN FLEET

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO
•2000 U.S. MANGA CORPS
90 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
ACTION/ADVENTURE

I was in Amarillo, Texas, last week during a five-day road trip from my hometown in Washington, D.C., back to So-Cal. Texas has the best burgers in the world, but the price for them, I discovered traveling through what seemed like an endless horizon of scorched ranches and grazing cattle, was the overpowering smell of cow shit that seeps into your nose, clogs your pores, and stinks your clothes like week-old funk. You never adjust, folks, and the smell never dies.

Case in point: I was watching U.S. Manga's *Virgin Fleet*. They say it's a love story, so I'm ready to take this as the shojo anime it is, when a character announces through a good bit of overacting, the insanity of the plot. There is a Navy in this universe, divided between men who are willing to fight (and die) for the protection of the planet, and an elite cadre of women who train to use their "Virgin Energy" to stand as our Earth's last defense. Virgin Energy is, of course, what it sounds like. Where *Virgin Fleet* isn't what it sounds like, however, is that Ohji Hiroi, creator of this and *Sakura Wars*, expects us to take it all the more seriously than the joke it is. The characters bounce from campy *Sailor Moon*-ish love dilemmas (one of the unmemorable heroines is bound to the only male in the cast, but cannot marry him until she passes the Virgin Fleet tests of butt-kicking and coitus free romance) to goofy tomfoolery (a test piloting run for the girls turns deadly as combatants cheat, ha ha).

There's sexist rivalry between the male sailors and the virgins, but it's all absurd. *Virgin Fleet*, if you're still thinking of the analogy, is the manure. U.S. Manga puts out such better product than this—check out *Grave of the Fireflies* if you don't believe me—that you question their decision to release it. Still, Virgin Fleet is the only anime dubbed unwatchable by the entire anime review crew. That's high praise, and worth a star. But only one. **GR**



FLINT THE TIME DETECTIVE

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 ADV FILMS
90 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★ SCI-FI/ACTION

The doorway to children's hearts via Japanese animation is still wide open and *Flint the Time Detective* is the latest coup attempt to wrest the children's cartoon throne away from the greedy clutches of Pikachu. Set in the 25th century, *Flint the Time Detective* is a whimsical children's anime where the future meets the past. In the 25th century there is a Bureau of Space and Time that runs the Time Police Agency. The job of the Time Police is to stop time thieves from destroying time as the world knows it.

Flint Hammerhead is a young boy growing up in prehistoric times with his father Rocky. While out chasing dinosaurs one day, their hunt is interrupted by an evil woman named Petrafina and her two sidekicks. Petrafina, who is a professional time thief by trade, is after a small device called a time shifter. Unfortunately, Flint and Rocky get in the way of Petrafina's quest for the time shifter, and both of them end up fossilized under volcanic lava for the next million years. Flint and his father are uncovered in the 25th century by two young children, Tony and Sarah. The time that Flint has spent fossilized has given him super human strength. The Bureau of Space and Time takes an interest in Flint and decides to make him an official Time Detective. Now it's up to Flint, Rocky, Sarah and Tony to stop Petrafina from stealing all the time shifters.

Flint the Time Detective is blessedly not another "monster-raising" clone, like *Digimon* or *Monster Rancher*. Although Petrafina and her lackeys seem to be the Team Rocket of *Flint*, the similarities end there. *Flint* also takes advantage of computer graphics, as small special effects have been added by using CGI. The plots are simple and rather inane, but as this anime is set to capture the hearts of the younger demographic, this does not take away from Flint at all. I would think that most parents would just be relieved to see an anime enter their home that does not scream Pikachu. **GR**

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SAMURAI-X VOL. 2

REVIEWED BY SHOLA AKINNUSO
•2000 ADV FILMS
60 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED
★★★★1/2 ACTION/DRAMA

Okay, there are samurai and ninja and all sorts of downright delicious bits of stylized violence that put *Samurai X: Betrayal*, the dramatic OAV prequel to the legendary *Ruroni Kenshin* series, so far on the "kewl" geek-boy radar that *Ninja Scroll* and *Dagger of Kamui* are fighting for space in the limelight. Hell, I've already said that the first part of this series is one of the best romantic-era themed ninja anime ever made. With a style that can only be called visual poetry, director Kazuhiro Furuhashi splices bloody violence with gorgeous golden sunsets and rose petal memories, cuts scenes of tranquil gardening and quiet thoughts with abrupt decapitations and sudden impalings. The effect is as disconcerting as it is lasting. I could go on about how *Samurai X: Betrayal*, on the surface, has the visual feel of Kabuki play—all style and inference. But make no mistake. Look a little deeper, past the symbolisms and muted monotones of dying characters looking for life, and you'll find that this heavy-handed melodrama does better western tragedy than anything currently in the theaters. Watching the players move like well-placed chess pieces to the climax is *Samurai X*'s joy. You know what's going to happen, and exactly who's going to die. The dead-on character designs, expert foreshadowing, and knowledge of how these things tend to go tell the more observant viewers everything they need to know. It's that love of seeing the elements fall properly in their places, watching the characters go through their emotional rounds, that leads to an appreciation of how well-written the whole drama is, how powerful the admittedly goofier *Ruroni Kenshin* series becomes because of it. The final battle scene here, between faceless ninjas cloaked in the kewlness of historical accuracy, gets added weight, not because of the exchange of steel (which is excellent), but via the emotional baggage behind the clashes. The imagery, all of it, is both mature and beautiful, visceral and disturbing, capturing the best elements of anime with an ease rarely seen. Get the damned tapes. **GR**

LOST UNIVERSE DVD VOL. 2

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 ADV FILMS
100 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUB/SUB
★★★ SCI-FI/ACTION

シリースペースコメディ

In this second volume of *Lost Universe*, it's all about geriatrics, chickens, and angry nurses. What do these three things have in common, you ask? Absolutely nothing, other than the fact that all of them cause Cain Blueriver headache after headache. If it's not Milly insulting his cape, then it's Canal telling him to put on womens' pantihose. Cain, Canal, and Millenia all take on security jobs to help pay for the weapons upgrades for Swordbreaker, and the kitchen appliances that Millenia manages to destroy every time she cooks.

Their first job lands them in the employ of an elderly couple, along with a trap made by a third party who has no small interest in Cain, his psychic sword, and the Swordbreaker. Their second job puts them in the middle of a battle between two teams of psychotic nurses hell bent on destroying each other and healing the wounded. Cain is forced to dress as a woman in order to complete his mission. What's left? Yup, you guessed it: chickens. Lots of chickens. Welcome to a planet where the people worship our tasty corn-fed, feathered friends.

Lost Universe has managed to get better with this second tape, even though I was skeptical of its ability to amuse me. I should have had more faith in the creators of *Slayers*. By maintaining interesting individual plots without losing sight of the main storyline, and containing enough humor about Cain's ridiculous cape, this series is definitely keeping up with its predecessor. **GR**

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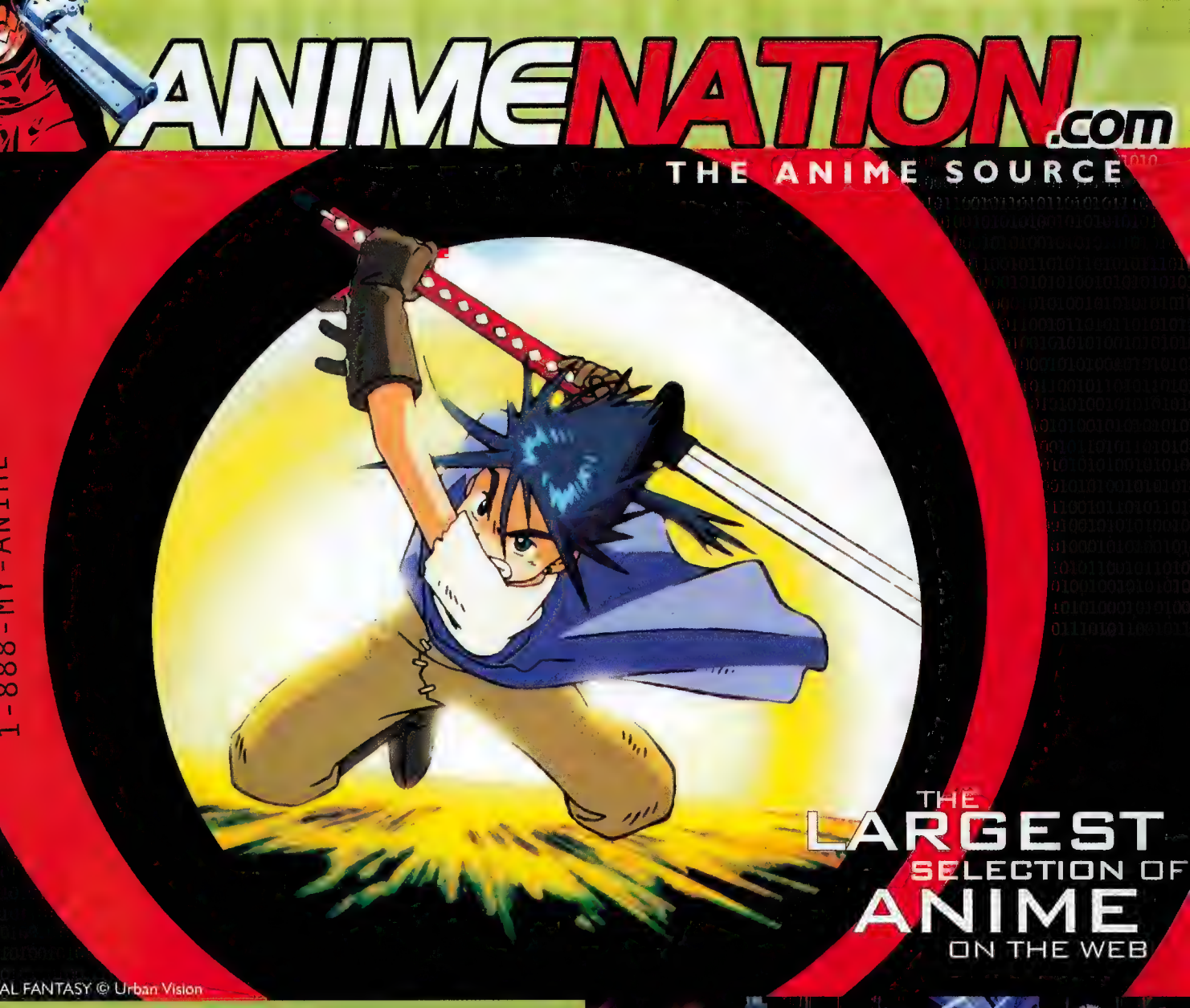

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GUNDAM WING DVD VOL.3

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER
•2000 BANDAI ENTERTAINMENT
125 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUB/SUB
★★★ SCI-FI/MECHA/ACTION

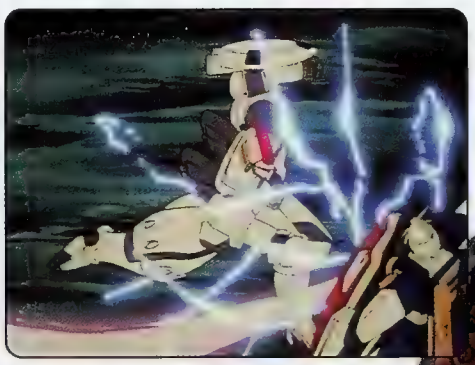
The *Gundam* phenomenon moves onward in the third DVD collection from Bandai Entertainment. *Gundam* has managed to be one of the longest lasting and archetypal pieces of anime ever to be produced in the land of the rising sun. Few creations have had this kind of staying power. In fact, the only other one that comes immediately to mind is *Dragon Ball*. While series rise and fall in popularity, and some become classics, *Gundam* has managed to not only become classic anime, but to remain insanely popular even today. How is this possible? I suppose that human obsession with giant robots and mass destruction never really dies. And no one really does the giant robot shtick better than Gundam. Who really wouldn't want to see five-mile swaths of land laid to barren waste by a shoulder cannon the size of an aircraft carrier? As we all learned in kindergarten, the wanton destruction of other peoples' property is fun.

With Heero believed to be dead, and the Gundams effectively rendered useless for the moment by the colony shield, the pilots are at a loss of what to do now. The best thing is to regroup and rethink their strategy. Duo teams up with Quatre and accompanies him back to his base of operations. Quatre shows Duo the peaceful city that he now calls home, and Duo is touched by how united the citizens are. These people are willing to sacrifice themselves in order to see justice done.

Wu Fei is still fighting his own demons of weakness, as he is still convinced that he is not fit to be a Gundam pilot. But circumstances force him back into the cockpit. Relena is fighting OZ on her own terms in Russia, determined to get back at them and avenge her father, much to the consternation of Lady Une. Trowa is faced with an opportunity to strike at OZ via subterfuge, but the attempt may just cost him his life. This risk is, however, not acceptable to the woman who cares for him.

Gundam is famous for its twisted plotlines, political unrest, ulterior motives, and multiple backstabbings. These things are as integral to the series as the giant robots themselves. *Gundam Wing* is no different than the others of its kin in this respect, yet the one glaring difference between *Gundam Wing* and other *Gundam* series is that *Gundam Wing* seems to be made with the intention of capturing a larger demographic. With the number of female anime lovers on the rise, having five handsome young males as the main characters certainly gets female attention. *Gundam* also manages to keep its animation consistent at TV quality, and the mech designs are always familiar to viewers who haven't seen Gundam in a few years. I really wonder just how long they will be able to keep this up? **GR**

AR ガンダムウィング



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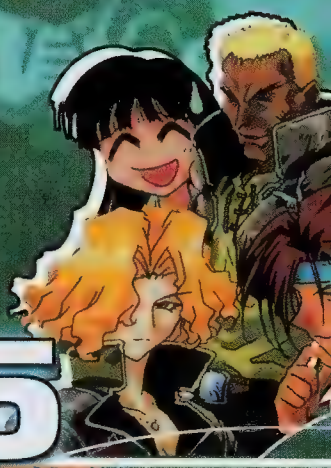
GAMERS' REPUBLIC EDITORS' TOP 5

D. Halverson	S. Akinnuso	C. Alexander
1. SIN: The Movie **adv**	1. Samurai-X: Betrayal **adv**	1. Samurai-X: Betrayal **adv**
2. Outlaw Star **bandai**	2. Cowboy Bebop Vol. 21 **bandai**	2. Princess Mononoke **miramax**
3. Spriggan **adv**	3. Princess Mononoke **miramax**	3. Generator Gawl **adv**
4. Gasaraki **adv**	4. Castle of Cagliostro **manga**	4. Trigun **pioneer**
5. Blue Submarine No.6 **pioneer**	5. Samurai-X: Trust **adv**	5. Rayearth OVA Vol. 2 **manga**



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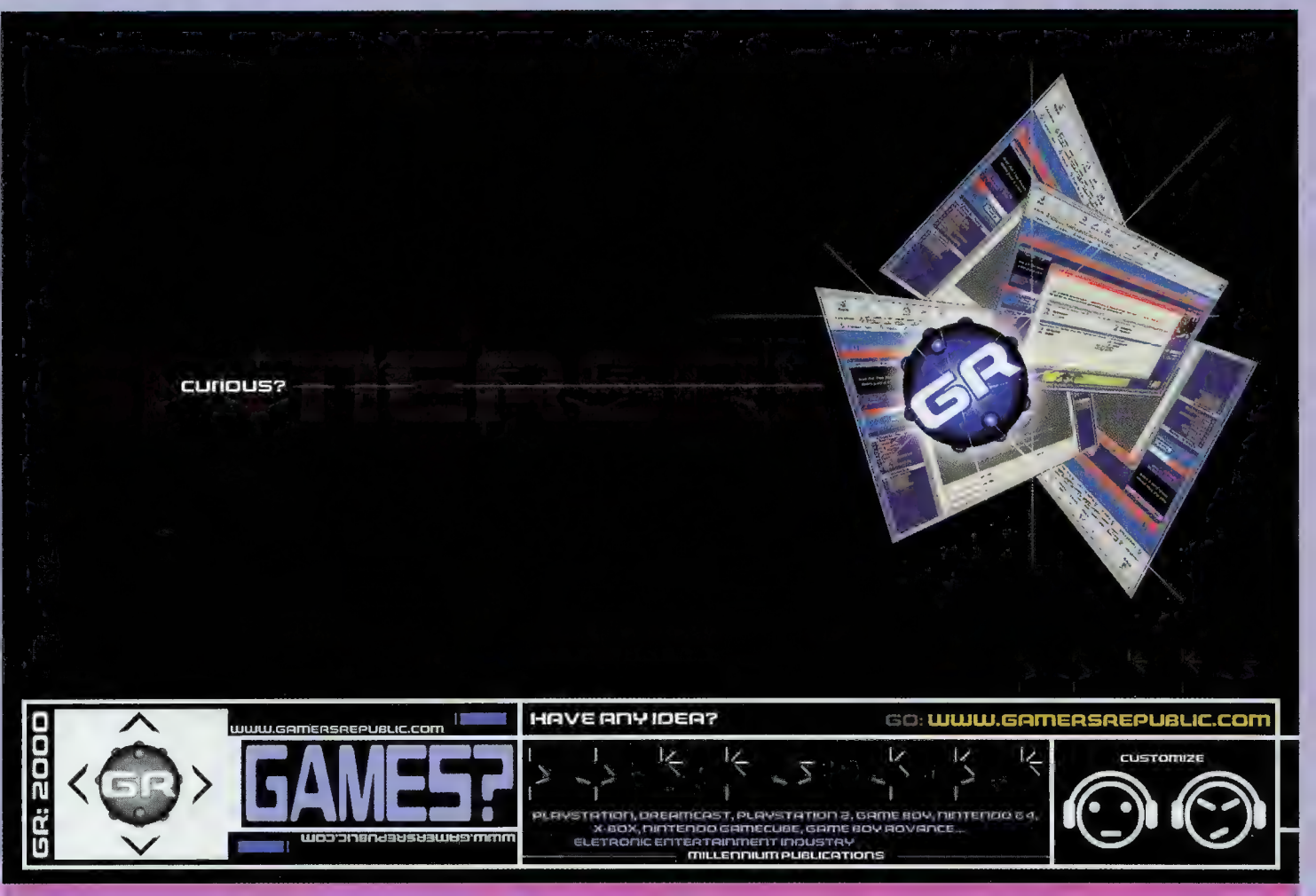

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GR GEAR

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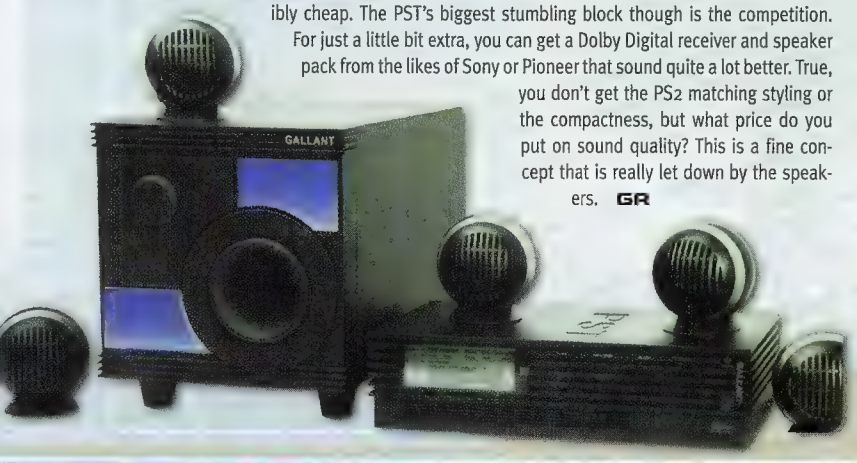
Desirability:

Home theater enthusiasts will be about the only PS2 owners ready to run with 5.1 surround sound right out of the box. For the majority of gamers, however, a multichannel setup is something new, as there has never been a need or it has just been prohibitively expensive. Now, Gallant has a system for your consideration that is about the same price as the PS2 itself.

The Audiostorm PST consists of a card-sized remote control, five identical satellite speakers, a subwoofer, and a box styled like the PS2 that houses the amplifier, Dolby Digital decoder, and basic video switcher. Setting up the unit couldn't be easier. Simply plug the included optical cable into the back of the PS2 and then into the Gallant. You can also run your video signal through the unit, though it only supports composite. From here, you connect the five small speakers and the sub and you're ready for multichannel sound.

This is where things start to go south a little bit. While the five tiny spherical speakers are backed up by the boomy sub, they simply cannot produce an appealing sound and feel incredibly cheap. The PST's biggest stumbling block though is the competition. For just a little bit extra, you can get a Dolby Digital receiver and speaker pack from the likes of Sony or Pioneer that sound quite a lot better. True, you don't get the PS2 matching styling or the compactness, but what price do you put on sound quality? This is a fine concept that is really let down by the speakers. **GR**



• Gamelink 300

• www.monstercable.com • Retail: $49.95

Desirability:

Is there a market for high-quality interconnects for a game system? Monster Cable seems to think that the PS2 will bring a more sophisticated user into gaming, and they are prepared to go after them with their latest line of products. I received a sample of their S-Video interconnect for the PS2, and I must say I'm impressed. Not only did it come packaged in a beautiful, velvet-like pouch, but the build quality was exemplary. The GameLink 300 exists in a different world from every other third party interconnect. The metal jackets on the plug end are a cool anodized blue, and the turbine-cut 24k gold plated RCA jacks grip firmly to their inputs. But this quality does not come cheaply. At around $50, they're at least twice as much as standard third party interconnects. The rise in picture quality was apparent, however, if not exactly overwhelming. But you buy things like this for peace of mind, and for that little bit of satisfaction when you glimpse this big beefy cable coming out of the back of your PS2. **GR**

• Fuji Finepix 40i

Fujifilm • www.finepix.com • Retail: Approx. $750

Desirability:

I was so impressed by this digital camera while in Japan covering the Tokyo Game Show, I just had to get one for myself. The Fuji Finepix 40i is not only incredibly small (roughly the size of a portable minidisc player), but it boasts a four million pixel Super HAD CCD, allowing you take pictures at a resolution of 2400x1800. For a camera this size, this is incredible. But above and beyond the startling resolution, the 40i can also capture 320x240 video clips with sound (up to six minutes on a 64 MB Smart Media card) and even playback raw MP3 files. Without having to worry about the wonky checkout systems of Sony's Magic Gate and Panasonic's Secure Digital, you can store all the MP3s you want on the removable media and share them an infinite number of times with your friends. This feature may need to be modified if Fuji decides to bring the Finepix 40i to the States. **GR**

• Konami RU025

Konami • www.konami.co.jp • Retail: $99 (bundle)

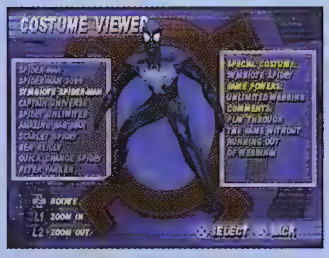
Desirability:

For use with Konami's latest Bemani game for PS2, Keyboard Mania, this USB-based peripheral, which comes bundled with the game in Japan, is surprisingly well made and perfectly suited to the game. Without a doubt it takes some getting used to, for even as the keys are about as large as they would be on a decent sized synthesizer, their reduced number makes hand placement a little nebulous at first. But you can quickly get the hang of it, and the keys' slightly rubbery but positive action makes it easy to play. And thankfully, Konami has provided two wheel controllers, one on each side of the keys, making it a cinch to reach them during those moments in the game that call for special flourishes. **GR**

SPIDER-MAN

The following codes are inputted in the Cheats option. From the Main Menu, select the Special option and then the Cheats option. The screen will shake if the code has been entered correctly. The underline in the codes below means enter a Space. If using the alternate costume codes, you can go back out to the Special screen and then select the Costumes options to check out the new threads.

A WILD WEB WE WEAVE
To access the Symbiote Spider-Man costume, granting unlimited web supply, enter: BLKSPIDR



TWO, TWO, TWO HITS IN ONE
To access the Spider-Man 2099 costume, granting twice the power of each attack, enter: TWNTYNDN

OH CAPTAIN, MY CAPTAIN!
To access the Captain Universe costume, granting invulnerability, double damage hits and unlimited web supply, enter: S_COSMIC

I DON'T SEE ANY SPIDER YOU BIG WUSS?
To access the Spidey Unlimited costume, granting the power to be invisible, enter: PARALLEL

BEN REILLY MEET PETER PARKER
To access the Scarlet Spidey costume, granting no powers, but was first worn by Ben Reilly who claimed to be the real Spider-Man, enter: LETTER_S

PAPER OR PLASTIC?
To access the Amazing Bag Man costume, which increases the difficulty by taking away the Spidey belt so you can only cary two web cartridges, enter: AMZBGMAN

AWWW, WHAT A PRETTY SPIDER
To access the Ben Reilly costume, which doesn't grant anything but looks really cool, enter: BNREILLY

PETER PARKER PICKED A PACK OF PICKLED PEPPERS
To play as Peter Parker without any costume, enter: MJS_STUD

SORRY SIR BUT YOUR PANTS WON'T BE READY UNTIL TUESDAY
To access the Quick Change Spidey costume, enter: ALMSTPKR

SO THAT'S HOW HOLLYWOOD DOES IT
To unlock the 21 different Storyboards used to create the movie scenes in the game, enter: CGOSSETT. The Storyboards option is in the Gallery option on the Main Menu.

COMIC BOOKS...I MEAN GRAPHIC NOVELS, ARE COOL
To unlock all six of the game comic covers, located in the Gallery option, enter: ALLSIXCC

ARACHNOPHOBIA? NO PROBLEM
After inputting this code, you will unlock the Level Select option in the Special screen and be able to play any of the 34 levels, enter: XCLSIOR

A SPIDEY FAN'S WET DREAM
To view a collection of 32 classic Spider-Man covers (including the first issue ever), located in the Gallery option, enter: CMC_BUFF

ONE SUPER, JUMBO, GIGANTO POPCORN PLEASE
To unlock all of the game's movie scenes, located in the Gallery option, enter: WATCH_EM

A SUPERHERO IS NOT ONLY A BIG SANDWICH
To unlock all of the hidden characters in the game and listen to Stan Lee himself describe each, enter: CVIEW_EM. The Character Viewer is in the Gallery option.

EVEN A SUPERHERO NEEDS HELP
To access the ability to be invulnerable, enter: RUSTCRST

SUPER HEROES HAVE EGOS TOO
To access big head mode, enter: DULUX

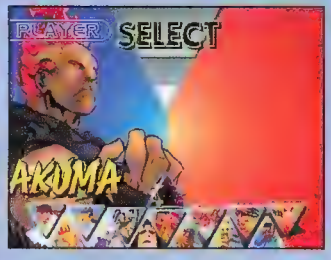
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME TO BEGIN WITH!?
To unlock everything, enter: EEL_NATS

THE PERKS OF RUNNING NEVERSOFT
To put J. James Jewett, the producer of the Tony Hawk and Spider-Man games, into the game in place of J. Jonah Jameson, enter: RULUR. He will also appear in the Character Viewer.

STREET FIGHTER III 3rd

GILL'S GIRL GRILL
To unlock Gill as a playable character, first beat the game. Then start a new game and highlight Sean and press Up once in SFIII or Up twice in Second Impact.

AKUMA...GESUNDHEIT
To play as Akuma in Second Impact only, highlight Sean and press Up.



SO, YA LIKE TA PLAY ROUGH, EH
To access extra options in either game, at the Mode Select screen, hold down the Left and Right triggers and keep them held through the following: select Option and hit Start, press Left (2), X (2), Right (2), Down, Left (2), Y (2), Right (2), Down, Left (2), X, Y, Right (2), Down, Left (2), Y, X, Right (2), Down. If performed correctly, a new selection called Extra Options will appear.

It's pretty simple, really. If you're a fan of classic video-game music and want to hear it performed well with real rock instrumental arrangement, you must get this CD. The heart of the Minibosses' debut CD is incredible versions of some of the greatest tunes from some of the greatest games of the 8-bit era: Castlevania, Ghosts 'n' Goblins, Contra, Wizards & Warriors, Metroid and Simon's Quest. Using some mad guitar, bass and percussion work (no synthesized crap here), the classic compositions have been re-created masterfully—even better than any arranged soundtrack to come out of Japan. Contra and Castlevania steal the show, but there's not a bad track in the bunch; hell, even the tunes I don't remember being that good on the NES rock here. Sure, there are five other tracks too, which range from mildly interesting to embarrassing (someone must be punished for their rendition of the *G.I. Joe* theme song), but the game tunes are awesome enough to ignore the rest. Right now their CD is only available through the Minibosses' web site (minibosses.com), but with the musical skills demonstrated here, it's only a matter of time before they land a contract (or start making redbook audio for Konami). How about Ninja Gaiden and Mega Man next time? - C. HOFFMAN

THE MINIBOSSES
Kraid Records, Domestic
A-

It never fails. Each time I play VAST, anyone within an earshot is instantly transfixed. "*What is that?*" "It's VAST (Virtual Audio Sensory Theatre), a gift of sound. Go buy it. I guarantee, even if you like ___, it will fill your soul." I'm like an Amway salesman with VAST—a self-appointed freelance promoter of Jon Crosby and company. Have been ever since I stumbled across their self-titled debut CD, which I bought based solely on the packaging. If you frequent music television (or what's left of it at least), you may remember their first video, "Pretty When You Cry," which looks like it was shot for about ten bucks, but was still pretty cool in an attractively creepy way. This time out the title track, "Free" (single of the year so far), is accompanied by one of the best music videos in recent memory. If you're flipping through and see some guys in what looks like living swamp, you've arrived. The new material is somewhat more shiny and mainstream too, but it's still utterly masterful in every way. Not nearly as ominous and gothic sounding as the debut with *Music for People*, Crosby is obviously trying to attract a wider audience without selling out fans, and I think he's done enough to please, if not overjoy, both.

Where the original CD was best enjoyed curled up alone to reflect, to let your mind wander or just imagine, the new material is much more identifiable. "I Don't Have Anything" soars as the love song of the new millennium, "Blue" will slip you in to an altered state, and "A better place" will undoubtedly turn you into a VAST fan for life as it seeps into "Song Without a Name" drenched in lordly background vocals and gallantry. It's simply magical. Maybe I would have preferred more of the solemn, hauntingly spiritual sound that hooked me initially, but honestly, I can't say for sure. *Music for People* is another gift, a bright light in a music scene desperately in need of innovation and a return to musicianship over showmanship. I suggest visiting realvast.com right now to begin your ascent. - D. HALVERSON

VAST - MUSIC FOR PEOPLE
Elektra/weblink ready
A

Gamers' Republic Music Reviews

Audiophiles
What GR is listening to this month

D. Halverson	G. Fiechter	M. Hobbs	Pooch	T. Stratton
1. VAST *music for people*	1. RADIOHEAD *kid a*	1. RADIOHEAD *kid a*	1. VAN HALEN *van halen 1*	1. MYSTICAL *shake ya ass*
2. SCORPIONS *berliner philharmoniker moment of glory*	2. BJORK *selmasongs*	2. BJORK *selmasongs*	2. THE PHARCYDE *frontlines*	2. RADIOHEAD *kid a*
3. BT *movement in still life*	3. MADONNA *music*	3. MADONNA *music*	3. 2PAC/OUTLAWS *hell for a hustler*	3. MARTIN DENNY *exotic sounds of...*
4. BOWIE AT THE BEEB *best of the BBC sessions*	4. SCORPIONS *berliner philharmoniker...*	4. HOOVERPHONIC *the magnificent tree*	4. VAN HALEN *5150*	4. JONNY RAD *skate and destroy*
5. ORPHEN *soundtrack*	5. VAST *music for the people*	5. APHEX TWIN *i care because you do*	5. HANDSOME BOY M.S. *so how's your girl*	5. BECK *midnight vultures*

N. Lui	S. Dempster	S. Akinnuso	G. Elmquist	C. Hoffman
1. MADONNA *music*	1. DESTINY'S CHILD *The writing's on the wall*	1. THE SPOOKS *The Spooks*	1. SPINESHANK *the height of calousness*	1. THE MINIBOSSES *the minibosses*
2. AYUMI HAMASAKI *duty*	2. VAST *music for people*	2. MADONNA *Music*	2. SCORPIONS *berliner philharmoniker*	2. MADONNA *music*
3. MARIKO KOUDA *sora*	3. 2PAC *greatest hits*	3. BLACKSTAR *blackstar*	3. NOFX *i heard they suck live*	3. WWF VOL. 3 *soundtrack*
4. L'ARC-EN-CIEL *real*	4. UB40 *labor of love*	4. MOS DEF *black on both sides*	4. SOULFLY *primative*	4. YASUNORI MITSUDA *creid*
5. LOVE HINA *original soundtrack*	5. BOYS 2 MEN *evolution*	5. COMMON *like water for chocolate*	5. RADIOHEAD *kid a*	5. MELISSA ETHRIDGE *your little secret*

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WEIRD-OHS

REVIEW

ADV FILMS (www.advfilms.com)
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SUITABLE FOR ALL AGES
REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON

From the masters of all things rendered—Canada's Mainframe Entertainment Inc. (*ReBoot*, *Shadowraisers*, *War Planet*)—and via ADV Films—masters of all things anime—comes *Weird-Ohs*, a silly, children's situation comedy with an emphasis on quickie sketches, chain reactions, and enough in jokes to keep the censor's hands floating uneasily over the bleep button for the duration. We're talking fun for the whole family here, especially if you live in a house on wheels (or blocks) or find satisfaction in crawling under your car to fix it yourself. Resembling a collision between *Dukes of Hazard* and *Melrose Place*, with a slice of *American Pie* on the side, *Weird Ohs* takes place in a parallel universe somewhere off of Route 66 in a town called Weirdsville.

The setup is familiar enough: there's Digger and Eddie, the dumber than dumb best friends who perpetrate nonstop havoc; Portia (pronounced Porche), the town squeeze and all-around glamour puss; Davy, the object of her infatuation (who happens to be in love with someone, check that, something else, namely his Harley); Wade A. Minute, the token spoiled rich kid who stalks Portia; and their teacher, Daddy O. Chassis, a man who's baby (yup, Baby Chassis) drives a 120 horsepower baby buggy. At the diner where they hang out, V8 engines double as super charged food processors and the drink of the day is Clutch Cola. Where *ReBoot* makes constant reference to all things computer related, *Weird-Ohs* alludes to all things automotive. What could be stranger? Well, check out those mugs. The characters are neither human nor animal. Auto mutants? Regardless, the coffee guzzlers at Mainframe do a fantastic job of not only bringing them to life but keeping up with the writers who literally fill every frame with either a joke or pratfall.

It wasn't so long ago that computer generated toons were a novelty. With the introduction of Donkey Kong, Beast Machines, Starship Troopers, Max Steele, Action Man and a slew of others, they've practically become the standard. As a result, a show can no longer survive on pretty renders alone. *Weird-Ohs* not only has the looks but hemorrhages humor at a rapid fire pace that will keep the kids rolling on the floor while the parents, older brothers and sisters (aptly glued) struggle to hold back their own inner child.

THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

In an inspired bit of paternal casting, Angelina Jolie's real-life dad, Jon Voight, has been cast as Lara Croft's father in the upcoming *Tomb Raider* flick. Voight, perhaps most respected for his portrayal of Joe Buck in *Midnight Cowboy* (the only X-rated film ever to win a Best Picture Oscar), has recently gained cult status with his hilarious, mugging turns in films like 1997's *Anaconda*.

Long-time Tim Burton collaborator Danny Elfman has just signed on to score Sam Raimi's new *Spider-Man* film, due out in 2002. Elfman, once frontman for modern rock group Oingo Boingo, got his feature-film scoring debut on Tim Burton's *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*, and has since scored the first two Batman films, *Mission: Impossible*, *Sleepy Hollow*, and many, many others.

Survivor cutiepie Colleen Haskell, having snubbed offers from Playboy for a naked romp, has just agreed to star alongside so-called funny man Rob Schneider in his new film, *Animal*. In this high-concept comedy, Schneider, upon receiving organ transplants from various animals, begins to take on the donors' characteristics. Sounds hilarious, no? Still, any chance to get another eye-full of Colleen's cute little face and hopefully healed legs should be worth the price of a matinee. And as for Colleen's new onscreen companion, even Rob Schneider must be an improvement over a naked Dick Hatch.

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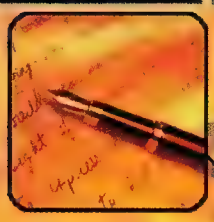

readers 01.1001 FALLOUT

Should you wish to put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard), please write to: **Fallout, Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 215, Westlake Village, CA 91361 USA (editorial@gamersrepublic.com).**

Count Dracula wants his Dreamcast2!

Dear GR,

Now guys, listen to me very carefully and I want you to forward this e-mail to SoJ and SoA's CEOs or give me their e-mail addresses so I can send this myself. Anyway, I want to talk about the DREAMCAST 2!! Yes, you heard me right, 2! Because any one with a low IQ can see and knows that the current Dreamcast capabilities are no match for the coming bad boys (Sony, Nintendo, and Microsoft), so it is the right time to do number 2 since the Dreamcast is ruling the world right now and also because all the other competitors have revealed their hardware specifications. Also, right now the PS2 is no match for the Dreamcast but this fact will really change in the future (when MGS2 arrives). I myself cancelled my PS2 preorder and bought a Dreamcast (who needs Tekken when you have Soul Caliber). But the very very very most important thing about the Dreamcast 2 should be THE BACKWARD COMPATIBILITY! YOU HEAR ME SEGA cause we don't want any more mad SEGA owners. So now it is the time to announce the second generation of the Dreamcast machine.

The year 2001 would be great timing to reveal to the whole world who SEGA really is. Finally, SEGA, after all what you have done to us ... we still love you and love your original games and we can not imagine the future without a zillion polygon per second Sonic. Again, don't forget the backward compatibility this time please.

Yours,
Abdullah Alkhalagi a.k.a. Count Dracula
An Arabic videogame magazine editor
Holy Mecca
Saudi Arabia

Abdullah,
So, let me get this straight. The Dreamcast is not as powerful as the PS2 but you cancelled your PS2 to buy a Dreamcast but want Dreamcast 2. Abdullah, pal, Sega's not even halfway through the lifespan of the Dreamcast; they just got the thing online and lowered the price. The next 2-3 years we'll see the console reach its full potential and rack up A-games like free beers at a tractor pull. Try to keep it all in perspective. If a console only stayed around for three years, a company like Sega, Sony, Nintendo, or Microsoft would never have time to recoup the millions it takes to market and manage a console. Sega will undoubtedly develop a new console sometime down the road, and chances are it will be backwardly compatible, but for the next few years enjoy the games. The greatest hardware can still have crap games just like dated hardware can still produce masterpieces. Look at Conker's BFD, Dinosaur Planet and Banjo-Tooie. Those three games will all likely be A titles, yet they're on a dated cart-based system. So enjoy Sega's best lineup since the heyday of 16-bit and leave the business to Sega. Peter and company know wasabe. We'd love to see your mag someday by the way. Send us a copy.

Dear GR,

Upon reading the Oct. 2000 issue it became clear that video gamers are also involved in politics, although some may say misguided. I will not discuss my political decision or why; more importantly, I will discuss some facts that seem to be missing.

Our country was founded on several principles (i.e., constitution) that have held intact through multiple political parties. We are a society based on democracy, not on dictatorship. Senator Lieberman and Al Gore have some very sound principles. They cannot change our constitution or freedoms by themselves. Our Congress will still be made of many other senators, from each party (Republican and Democratic) that will combat attempts to moral our society. Look at the political parties based on previous right-doings, look past smears and other negatives. We have the power to dictate not only our President and Vice President, but how and where they will play the game. (PUN) Modern email has created an opportunity for each gamer to contact their Presidential Party and let them know what they support. They also have senators and other party members at quick contact. Get out and vote.....then provide some direction for your party. Don't be scared of any individual, the power is still within the people. An analogy is find the good game and play it for all its worth, don't look simply at the system or you may miss out on something truly memorable.

Scott Blank

Scott,
You make some valid points, but maybe you missed ours. We're not saying to vote for any particular party, we're saying vote against those who would diminish our freedom of choice (in this case, against Lieberman). Even though no man can take away the rights to publish or play what we want, the chill effect caused by putting an anti-gaming, anti-media politician into such a high position could be enough to scare publishers into avoiding anything innovative or edgy so they don't get badmouthed on national TV. Those of us at GR, at least, are going to show our displeasure for the man who's built a career around emphasizing digital violence over real violence in the voting booth, and we encourage like-minded gamers to do the same.

Dear GR,
Thanks for coming out against candidate Lieberman on libertarian grounds. That's pretty hardcore and gamers owe you for it. As you say Bush isn't much of a choice, either, but I cannot in good conscience vote for Gore and Lieberman, and I certainly do plan to vote.

Just a thought: is it possible Capcom delayed Cannon Spike due to perceived political pressure already? That would suck.

A Reader

Reader,
It is, and that is exactly why we're so concerned. In fact Capcom expressed concern when they visited our offices recently. Any further tremors in the force we'll pass on to you.

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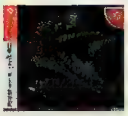
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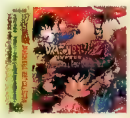
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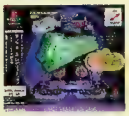
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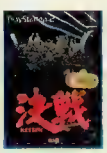
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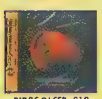
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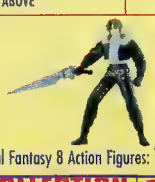
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▸ *SPYRO, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 78*

within the confines of the system. And the superb voice acting, with the accents that are completely arbitrary and completely amusing, only adds to the personality. I especially liked the clumsy child with a speech impediment who commands you to "free your mind," then soars across a valley and climbs up a wall and across the ceiling. Take the blue pill that is Spyro: Year of the Dragon and you too will discover the truth: this is a fabulous game. **GR**

▸ *SKIES OF ARCADIA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 43*

strategy for each player in each turn, sort of like a real-time game of Battleship. Although the turn-based battles in Skies are standard role-playing issue, the weapons and magic system are just the opposite. Without going into too much detail, six types of magic, determined by the color of your weapon, exist. Moon power and spirit points allow you to learn new spirit moves and magic spells, and each color represents a different type of magic. Of course visually these powers look absolutely amazing when unleashed. The music deserves a nod as well, as it's on par with everything else—magnificent.

A few hours into the preview version of Skies, exploring the sewers of Valua—a spectacular fortress with two economies—after Vyse and Aika meet their first ally, Drachma—a battle savvy pirate with a mechanical arm who's sole purpose in life is to kill a gigantic Air Whale—my preview had to end. For now. It's times like these I wish I could lock myself away the way I used to before my life became a series of deadlines. If it means going without sleep, I will see the end of Skies, and then Grandia II, and PSO, as games like this make livin' that much sweeter. The Dreamcast firing on all cylinders is a joy to behold. I can't tell you how much I love this console and what Sega is doing with it. Like Nintendo, their original content scrambles your DNA, allowing you to leave the real world behind and escape into magical worlds once only imagined through books and the finest cinema. **GR**

▸ *SHENMUE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 45*

achievement, and I'm nit-picking only because it is such an ambitious game. Imagine a role playing game that attempts to capture in real time the sensation of reality. This is what Shenmue does so brilliantly. As you walk around the various towns, it's absolutely amazing how real the environments look, and the character's facial mannerisms are truly unprecedented. This is partly because Suzuki dedicated a huge number of polys to the faces, skimping somewhat on the body modeling and textures. This is actually very clever, as you spend most your time looking at the faces, and this is where all the emotion and drama is contained. No question, Shenmue is astounding, and should be at the top of any Dreamcast wish list. Just don't make the mistake that I did in assuming that Shenmue is going to transcend the video game genre. **GR**

▸ *ORPHEN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 67*

animation routines are limited and at times (especially during dialogue) awkwardly repeat. The battle system on the other hand is excellent - you can lock onto any enemy and perform a plethora of spectacular magic attacks, summon elementals, or charge and slash. The game also runs at 60 frames, which is obviously one of the PS2's most apparent strengths. The gameplay has ample diversity, including simplistic platforming routines, mild puzzles, exploration elements and lots of character interaction. In fact, together with the anime cut scenes from the Japanese TV series, the overall game universe is quite appealing, mixing ample doses of role-playing, action, and story. It's a shame the dub comes off so poorly. And, unfortunately, Activision was not able to fix Orphen's camera woes, so hyper-cam is still in effect. Overall, I still really recommend a purchase on this one. It has its flaws, like Blue Stinger did for the Dreamcast launch, but it's the only game of its kind and, stands as a great gauge for future refinements. **GR**

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